

THOSE WHO EXHAUST ALL THEIR PLEASURES IN THIS LIFE

You dissipated the good things you had in your worldly life and
enjoyed yourself in it. So today you are being repaid with
the punishment of humiliation for being arrogant in the land
without any right and for being deviators.

(Surat al-Ahqaf: 20)

HURUN YAHYA

INTRODUCTION

The world is filled with countless blessings, but many people are not even aware of them. Buried in their own pains and anxieties, they cannot see the beauty around them or take pleasure in the things they experience. If you asked them, they would say that life is a difficult struggle up a steep slope, for they are bored with it and exhausted. They continually complain that they find no pleasure in it any more, that they want to die in order to escape it. Some even go so far as to attempt suicide.

But life does not have to be this way. Of course, it has been created together with many imperfections and limitations. But the way to face them is not to struggle with life; rather, the solution lies in believing in Allah, for:

Any one who acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and recompense them according to the best of what they did. (Surat an-Nahl: 97)

The world, together with its imperfections, is filled with countless blessings. For those who look at life with the eyes of belief, its material and spiritual blessings are endless. As a result, they derive a deep delight from being able to see goodness and beauty everywhere and in all situations.

Most people who live apart from Allah have never even heard of these delights, since their rebellious spirit has long ago caused them to consume whatever pleasure they can find in their blessings. Devoid of belief, they spend what remains of their lives as “lost souls.” Their lives are dominated by weariness, boredom, emptiness, and unfulfilled longing. Time passes, but even if they could see the countless good things around them, they would be unable to take any true pleasure in them. Moreover, the anxieties they experience are not limited by their Earthly life.

Allah says that those who fritter away their joys in this life will be eternally deprived of them in the Hereafter:

On the Day when those who did not believe are exposed to the Fire: “You dissipated the good things you had in your worldly life and enjoyed yourself in it. So today you are being repaid with the punishment of humiliation for being arrogant in the land without any right and for being deviators.” (Surat al-Ahqaf: 20)

But no one would want to be in such a state or receive such a reward in either world. On the contrary, everyone would want to experience the finest pleasures from the possibilities that Allah gives them in both lives. And, if Allah wills, these desires can be attained rather easily.

This book seeks to show the deprivation, loss, and anxiety that come from living apart from religion, show people the state into which they have fallen, inform them how to keep their blessings in this world, and save themselves from the pangs they will suffer in the Hereafter. In addition, we would like to remind all people that this life is full of blessings and other good things that people can enjoy,

provided that they believe in Allah. And finally, this book invites everyone to follow His Way, submit to the Qur'an, and live a life of belief.

THOSE WHO ENJOY ALL THEIR PLEASURE IN THIS LIFE

A quick look at history shows that most people have one thing in common: Whether young or old, rich or poor, complaining about their lives is a significant part of their lifestyle. All that happens gives them an opportunity to express their discontent. Even if something seems to have a hundred good and pleasant aspects, instead of being content, they note a few imperfections and get upset. This way of thinking has become so ingrained that they react in the same way to things they have not yet even witnessed or experienced, because they think of possible difficulties and so make themselves unhappy.

As a result, they become quite weary for reasons that they cannot understand and come to feel that they will never be sufficiently happy about anything. Undoubtedly, you know people who complain: "I don't know what's wrong with me," "I'm so bored," "I'm fed up with this life," or "I don't feel like doing anything." If you tried to help them out of their deep-seated world-weariness and discontent, you would most likely fail.

Even if you took them to the most beautiful place in the world, spread the most wonderful blessings before them, and provided them with every luxury their hearts could desire, you could not get them to enjoy these things or to have these blessings exert a lasting influence upon their spirits. In other words, you could never make them really happy.

However, every place, from the high heavens to the deep seas is filled with countless wonders: beautiful living creatures (e.g., birds, rabbits, squirrels, lions, zebras, panthers, tigers, cats, dogs, and fish), thousands of varieties of fruit (e.g., strawberries, oranges, melons, plums, and peaches), plants that cheer the spirit (e.g., roses, orchids, daisies, violets, hyacinths, and carnations) and many other beautiful things that delight the human spirit. A beautiful view, a pleasant human face, or a fine meal give great pleasure to the human spirit: In the Qur'an, Allah enumerates for us the many beautiful things He has offered us in this life, and He reminds us that these blessings are too numerous and varied for us to even count them:

Allah created the heavens and Earth and sends down water from the sky, and by it brings forth fruits as provision for you. He has made the ships subservient to you to run upon the sea by His command, and has made the rivers subservient to you. He has made the Sun and Moon subservient to you, holding steady to their courses, and has made the night and day subservient to you. He has given you everything you have asked Him for. If you tried to number Allah's blessings, you could never count them. Humanity is indeed wrongdoing, ungrateful. (Surah Ibrahim: 32-34)

If you tried to number Allah's blessings, you could never count them. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surat an-Nahl: 18)

Just one of these blessings delights the human spirit. Therefore, it is certainly unusual if someone who lives amid these beautiful things cannot notice them or be delighted by them. This is a great loss. Obviously, such people have tasted and consumed all of the delights of this life and now find them boring.

It is a great contradiction that those who make lame excuses to avoid religion want to see this world as a place in which they can laugh and enjoy themselves. Their greatest aim is to taste as many pleasures as they can. This universal law has remained unchanged throughout the ages. Some of those who do not understand life's real meaning have developed philosophies based on this world's pleasures and have praised those who try to "make the most of a day."

Horace (65-8 BC), the famous Roman lyric poet, said *carpe diem* (seize the day). This phrase, prevalent since the seventeenth century, sums up a philosophy of life based only on this world's life. In short, it means that a person should not think about tomorrow, but live in the moment and make the most of each day, that they should not consider that death can come at any moment or think about what comes next. In the same way, the Renaissance motto *memento mori* (remember you will die) reminds people that they will die and so they should embrace the world as much as they can. According to this idea, people should not be afraid of death; rather, knowing that it is near, they should live as they want, recognize no limits, and pursue only their own pleasure.

Throughout history, societies that have sought a good and happy life outside of Allah's revelations have developed many strange ideas and philosophies. One point that they all have in common, however, is the idea that people should appease their passions and desires and make full use of any blessings that come their way. Allah calls attention to such people's ambitions:

... So turn away from him who turns away from Our remembrance and desires nothing but the life of this world. (Surat an-Najm: 29)

Instead of thanking Him for the countless blessings and possibilities they have been given, they live with an insatiate greed:

Leave the person I created on his own to Me alone, him to whom I have given great wealth and sons who stay with him, and whose way I have smoothed. Then he wants Me to add yet more! (Surat al-Muddaththir: 11-15)

Why do people find themselves unfulfilled? Why can they not enjoy this life, other people, nature, and living things? Their only aim is to take advantage of this life's pleasures. Why, then, are they unable to enjoy these pleasures? Why are they so anxious, gloomy, depressed, and world-weary? How did they fall into the spiritual state that prevents them from noticing and enjoying these beauties and blessings? Why have they consumed all of this life's pleasure and find no joy in them? There is only one answer to these questions: Their denial of Allah, their ungratefulness toward Him and His blessings make their hearts anxious:

When Allah desires to guide someone, He expands his breast to Islam. When He desires to misguide someone, He makes his breast narrow and constricted as if he were climbing up into the sky. That is how Allah defiles those who have no belief. (Surat al-An'am: 125)

Due to their denial, Allah wills them to live in darkness and gloom, even though they are surrounded by beautiful things:

Allah is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light. But those who did not believe have false deities as protectors. They take them from the light into the darkness. Those are the Companions of the Fire, remaining in it timelessly, forever. (Surat al-Baqara: 257)

Since Allah created this world as a testing place, people who get caught up in this life's adornments make a great mistake. In one of his hadiths (sayings), the Prophet Muhammad (saas) says:

"The world is delightful. Allah will make you inherit it and see how you will behave there. Thus, avoid the world." (Sahih Muslim and al-Tirmidhi)

When we grasp that all of this world's blessings are a gift of Allah and are thankful for them, we please Allah. As a result, we are always aware that the beauty, blessings, and good things around us come from Him.

However, those who deny Allah do not see this truth. Instead, they ignore Him and appease their desires and passions. As they enjoy more and more of these blessings, their discontent also increases, because they are consumed by the maniacal desire to possess everything. Instead of being content with what they have, they are unhappy until they get even more. And as a result, they can never fully appreciate the countless blessings and limitless potentials that they already possess. For example, they may have a fine car but become dissatisfied with it as soon as a new model comes out. They believe that going on vacation will end all of their difficulties; however, the slightest setback causes them misery and anxiety. They do not try to overcome their difficulties with patience and submission to destiny, but become pessimistic and return even more anxious and disappointed. Even if they had enjoyed themselves, their pleasure is only temporary; the following anxiety is far more enduring.

Of course, this testing place is full of beautiful things as well as of flaws, imperfections, and lack of durability – all of which they will encounter. For example, rich people may lose their wealth through an accident or a disaster, attractive people may lose their looks, and intelligent people may lose their mental abilities. In addition, their youth and health, as well as their energy and strength, will fail in time. People who do not follow the Qur'an's morality also worry about meeting people who are spiritually and materially superior to them. The fact that some people are richer, more attractive, more successful, more intelligent, and have a wider social circle than they do plunges them into a deep depression.

So, this wrong-headed way of thinking explains why those who deny Allah are in a life-long search and cannot be content with what they have. Their desires make their lives difficult, for they cannot properly appreciate or enjoy what they have. Believing that all blessings will end with death, they consume and use up their beautiful things one by one. Beauty, youth, and health are all transitory

for them, and their ego's fierce desires make them unhappy with what they possess. And so they live in misery in both worlds:

They ask: “When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are telling the truth?” Say: “It may well be that some of what you are anxious to hasten is right on your heels.” (Surat an-Naml: 71-72)

Part of this misery is that these people live in a sort of Hell in this world, although they are surrounded by beauty and opportunity. Many people exist in this spiritual condition, and thus find that their level of anxiety, depression, stress, and psychological problems continue to increase. Those who constantly complain, saying: “I don’t know why I feel so anxious,” “I’m so bored,” “I’m fed up with this life,” or “I don’t feel like doing anything” must see that their spiritual condition needs to change. They must ask themselves what has happened to them – and why. Allah has revealed the cure: belief. We will now examine this important truth, and thereby reveal that only when we look at spiritual and material blessings with the eyes of belief can our spirit truly enjoy them.

BELIEF IS THE ONLY WAY TO ENJOY BLESSINGS

The Qur'an states:

... only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace. (Surat ar-Ra'd: 28)

In other words, only when we understand the mercy He bestows upon His servants and believe in Him can we escape unhappiness and boredom, and thereby enjoy real pleasure in this life and appreciate the value of beautiful things:

There is good in this world for those who do good. (Surat an-Nahl: 30)

So Allah gave them the reward of this world and the best reward of the Hereafter. (Surah Al 'Imran: 148)

But, as revealed in another verse, those who deny Him will have a life full of anxiety:

But if anyone turns away from My reminder, his life will be a dark and narrow one and on the Day of Resurrection We will gather him blind. (Surah Ta Ha: 124)

Only belief can save us from a life of anxiety, for we cannot find true happiness on our own. Even if people are rich, they cannot properly enjoy their wealth or enjoy the blessings they possess. In order to do this, they must understand how to appreciate them. For example, they must realize that a carnation with perfectly arranged petals, as well as its scent, softness, and incomparable beauty, is a great blessing of creation. But only believers can really understand this, because they know that whatever exists is a gracious gift from Allah and that all blessings come from Him. Therefore, they contemplate His infinite creative power in every beautiful thing, thereby increasing their love and attachment to Him. Our Prophet (saas) says:

“Love Allah due to the blessings He gives to you, and love me because Allah loves me.” (al-Tirmidhi)

Allah, in His infinite power and might, and out of His love and compassion toward humanity, allows all people to enjoy blessings in this life. Such people view getting up and breathing the morning air as wonderful blessings, for they take pleasure in the fact that He has given them another day to win His favor. They consider being able to walk, talk, laugh, and move as sources of happiness, knowing that He could remove these blessings if He so willed. Thus, they take great pleasure in this life.

Understanding that this life is a period of testing and that real life is the eternal life to come, they hope that the good moral character they display in this life, as well as the patience and acceptance they show when faced with adversity, will turn into blessings for them in Paradise. For this reason, every

anxiety they have in this life becomes a means to a reward. This is one reason why the believers are always full of joy, contentment, and peace.

Anyone who denies Allah will experience depression and take no delight in whatever pleasures he experiences, because he has removed himself so far from the state of healthy spirituality that faith provides.

THE PLEASURES OF THIS LIFE LOST BY THE UNBELIEVERS

This life has been created with blessings that are deeply appealing to people, for:

He has given you everything you have asked Him for. If you tried to number Allah's blessings, you could never count them. Humanity is indeed wrongdoing, ungrateful. (Surah Ibrahim: 34)

Moreover, Allah allows us to enjoy these blessings as we wish and informs us that if we thank Him, our blessings will increase even more. However, these wonderful blessings will be a cause of misery to those who are ungrateful. This is one of the Qur'an's deepest secrets, a manifestation of Allah's justice, and an important indication of the wisdom of His creation. For those who see the true Way and believe, He continually creates new opportunities and shows them the beauty of belief and the darkness of the unbelievers' lives. So, whatever blessings people may have cannot give them a sense of real security and contentment. This, in fact, is Allah's mercy toward His servants, for by this means they can understand that only believers who submit themselves to Allah can find true happiness and contentment, and thus submit themselves to Him.

By understanding the dangers of unbelief and the beauty of faith, those who can see the wisdom in Allah's creation will be delivered from deprivation in this life as well as from the unimaginable misery that they would have had in the life to come. Therefore, readers must understand what is meant by "the spiritual and material blessings that the unbelievers consume in this life." This will be examined in the following chapters. People who read the introduction and look at the chapter titles may think that this book is not meant for them for various reasons: They may think that they can take pleasure in life, other people, nature, and this world's beautiful things, or that they are somehow immune to the anxiety and depression described herein. However, we would like to remind such people that even a cursory consideration of this matter could be of benefit to them. If you carefully consider these pages, you will see that in what they relate, there is a lesson for everyone to learn.

Some people may become inured to their situation over time and think of it as normal, not realizing that they may be leading a life bereft of many pleasures and beautiful blessings that Allah has created for them. The reason why most people have never enjoyed these blessings is because they are satisfied by this life's ordinary and basic pleasures and may believe that there is nothing more. However, it is possible to derive a deeper pleasure from every blessing, for the pleasure derived varies with the person. In addition, people may think that they have already experienced enough pleasure from this life's blessings and good things, or that they have taken more than their fair share. In other words, they believe they do not need to be reminded. Others may never have experienced this greater, deeper joy within themselves or in others because no one has told them that such things exist. But now that they are reading these pages, Allah will make them aware of the possibility of losing their blessings in both worlds and show them how to avoid this loss. Up to this point, you may well have been unaware of this

issue. But now, after having acquired this knowledge, you will be responsible for thinking about it seriously and making a sincere effort to overcome any deficiency in your thinking.

People may not be in this spiritual state all the time. But they must not let this mislead them. If they are only occasionally wearied by life's routine aspects, grow bored with life; and think that life has no meaning, such discontent should be enough to make them seriously consider what is being said here. Remember that consuming and losing pleasures in this world is only the beginning of an eternal darkness in the world to come. In the next world, this misery will not be limited only to being unable to properly enjoy the blessings. Being unbelievers, such people will experience a much deeper misery. But for believers, the world to come will be transformed into an eternal blessing.

By understanding the unbelievers' situation, believers can see the nightmare of unbelief and learn from it. As a result, they will be very grateful to Allah for granting them faith. The following pages will consider the loss of blessings that turn one's life into a true misery, as well as mention the material and spiritual pleasures lost, and thereby reveal the life of deprivation that unbelievers are forced to endure.

LOST MATERIAL PLEASURES

They cannot enjoy their environment

Those who do not practice the Qur'an's morality appear to be overcome with anxiety about their environment and situation. It takes only a moment for you to grasp what kind of spiritual state they are in. Do you think that when they say everything is going well that they are contented, or that everything is as they want it to be? Do they say that they are happy and excited by their daily routine and their monotonous, humdrum lives? Every morning they wake up in the same house and the same room, make the same bed, put on the same clothes, walk down the same hall, get on the same bus, drive through the same streets, go to the same job, and sit in the same room in the same chair. All day long they speak to the same people about the same things. Do they say they are happy with their stereotyped conversations?

Do they say they are happy with seeing the same house, the same walls, the same office environment, the same décor, the same furniture in the same arrangement? Or do they tell how bored they are walking in the same streets and meeting the same people? Do they complain how this monotony takes away meaning in their lives? The answer to these questions is obvious. Those who do not follow the Qur'an's morality complain about their unchanging environment, lament that what once excited them now has no meaning and attraction, and express their boredom with life's monotony, for they can no longer see the surrounding beauty or enjoy their possessions and environment. This anxiety is so all-encompassing that they want to abandon their city and even their country.

But believers, however, never face such a situation. Even if they live in the same house all their lives, have the same furniture and belongings, and do the same job, they are content with everything, for only their belief in Allah and hope for Paradise make them happy. Despite this, however, it is not wrong for people to desire change. On the contrary, this desirable feature shows the richness of the human spirit. But this is totally different from the unbelievers' desire to find some way to relieve their boredom. This difference will soon become clear.

Certainly, the principal environment is one's house. When they are outside, some people cannot wait to go home, imagining spending an enjoyable evening there. Of course, people should feel content, secure, and happy at home, for they are among the people they love and trust, and away from the chaotic, insecure, and unpredictable world outside. Moreover, many people have designed their homes to be as comfortable as possible and have decorated them to suit themselves. But in spite of this positive environment, those who do not follow the Qur'an's morality are anxious even there.

When they move into their house, they think that they will enjoy every nook and corner in it. But gradually, all the furniture and accessories that they selected so carefully begin to lose their meaning and their appeal. Soon, they no longer feel comfortable there and want to go somewhere else to escape their feelings of anxiety and discontent. Even if the house is spacious, they find it confining, gloomy, dark, and small. They start to feel bored and anxious, saying: "This house oppresses me," "These things weigh me down," or "I'm tired of seeing the same things every day." Now they no longer enjoy their house and are no longer excited to be in it.

One of the main reasons for this is that their lives have become one long routine based upon their unbelieving society's preconceived standards. Everything is automatic: all of their daily activities, from the food they eat to the television programs they watch. Far from giving enjoyment, nearly all of these things have become compulsions. Another reason is their insatiable appetite for this life. When they compare other people's blessings with their own, they become jealous and miserable. Realizing that someone else owns something nice that they do not makes every attractive possession they see a new source of misery for them. For example, they may grow upset if their house is not luxurious with a sea view, a rose garden and swimming pool, or if it does not have the latest décor.

Their anxiety does not cease even if they do finally obtain what they covet, and they do not want to share them with others. If a friend or relative asks for money, they worry that their fortune will diminish. Sometimes they fear that they will lose something, because they know that a disaster could strike them at any time. Divorced from the Qur'an's morality, they do not consider Allah's power and that whatever happens to them comes from Him to test them.

But believers never suffer from such anxiety, for they are always aware that they are with Allah and that this world is a testing place designed to show their trust in, and faithfulness and submission to Him. For this reason, they are content with whatever happens and with every situation and condition that He has created for them, and take pleasure in them. They demonstrate the same spiritual state in their environment, whether they live in a small cottage, a mansion, or a palace. They are not concerned about the structure's architecture, materials, colors, size, style, or how long they have lived in it.

All of these things are blessings for everyone. However, believers place importance on something beyond these, and it is this that makes them happy and content: living according to the Qur'an's morality. Of course they want their houses to be as beautiful, modern, and esthetically pleasing as possible, because they look at their surroundings with the eyes of belief. In addition, since their ability to see beauty and appreciate detail is greater than that of most people, their sense of beauty, esthetics, and variety is more refined. But even if there are deficiencies in what they have, they still value and enjoy them. In return for their fine moral character, Allah shows His mercy and love by promising believers the best of everything and enabling them to derive a deep enjoyment from what they have:

[Musa said to his people,] "And when your Lord announced: 'If you are grateful, I will certainly give you increase; but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is severe.'" (Surah Ibrahim: 7)

... so that Allah can reward them for the best of what they did and give them more from His unbounded favor. Allah provides for anyone He wills without reckoning. (Surat an-Nur: 38)

Those who do good will have the best, and more! (Surah Yunus: 26)

Their inability to enjoy their work

Due to their anxiety-ridden spiritual condition and the "vicious circle" in which they live, those unbelievers whose main goal is to have a good life and make the most of their blessings consider working as a great nuisance. Not only does it make them tired and therefore unable to live the good life all the time, it also reminds them just how hard it is to live the good life. Their ideal is to work less and to use their extra time to live a better life. But this is impossible, for they must always work harder to attain their desires, which takes away their time for enjoying them.

Looking carefully at the professional lives of those who do not follow the Qur'an's morality, we can see that, for them, working has become a trouble and a vicious circle. To reach their jobs on time, they have to get up early, which means that they must sleep early. And then there is all the time that they have to spend to get to work, bathing, eating, cleaning, running errands, and meeting all of the countless needs of daily life. Seeing that they have at most maybe a couple of hours each day to really enjoy themselves, they become angry and depressed.

This situation is a great source of discontent for them, as are the usual difficulties and worries in professional life. Such negativity starts during their university years, for all of us have heard media reports about new graduates giving way to despair because they cannot realize their goals or dreams. Not realizing that everything comes from Allah and is for their own good, they become anxious and worry about whether they will find a job, earn lots of money, advance in their career, and other such matters. These people do not realize that everything happens under Allah's control and so, they find it very tiring and depressing to go from door to door looking for a job and being rejected. And after all these wearying efforts, often they wind up accepting a job they do not want. They are unable to find the kind of employment they dreamed of in their university days. And instead of securing the kind of position they want, they are forced to accept a job that has no appeal for them. Because they cannot do the tasks they hoped and planned to, their second-choice work becomes an inconvenient drudgery for them. No matter how tired they are, they must go to their job (even if they do not like it, they need to earn money), where they will be unhappy. In addition, they must often travel through rain, snow and mud puddles to catch the bus to work. They have to wait in line for it to come, sweating in the heat during summers and feeling chilled in the winter cold. The situation is not much different for those who drive to work in cars. Now they must wait for hours tied up in traffic and often begin arguing with other drivers out of sheer impatience. Upon arriving, their work environment is another source of stress for them. But they, like everyone else, begin their new jobs with high hopes of earning a good salary and moving into a better neighborhood.

But the comfortable, secure, and happy working life they had hoped for quickly becomes ridden with anxiety. As in all situations where the Qur'an's morality is not practiced, they see an environment of vexation, quarrelling, jealousy, and general unhappiness. And so they begin to seek out pretexts to argue with their coworkers, become jealous of those who have a higher position, and humiliate those who are in a lesser position. Secretaries, managers, and directors compete with each other, and so cannot become friends. If someone else is appointed to a job they wanted, they become frustrated and think that they have been treated unfairly. Their resentment increases toward their coworkers, especially the

managers and directors, and they soon become fed up with their work, are discontent, and bored. They do not like always being in the same position, and seeing the same people and having to work hard in an environment they despise gradually wears them down. As a result, their level of tiredness, stress, and unhappiness increases.

But the situation in which these people find themselves totally results from the false ideas on which they've based their lives. Of course, people must work at some job that will allow them to earn enough to survive. And it is quite natural that they will experience a number of difficulties that their work brings with it. The point, however, is that the difficulties that any job and working environment present will become sources of frustration for ignorant people, simply because of their state of mind.

Because both they and those around them live divorced from the moral teachings of the Qur'an, and because they view their lives and events from their own particular point of view, everything seems more difficult and frustrating for them.

The same is true for those who do not work hard to find a good and rewarding job, perform the kind of work they like to do, and secure a good position in their chosen career. Even if they achieve a good standard of living, no amount of material wealth can relieve the emptiness in their hearts. They experience the same anxious spiritual state. They live a life of discontentment because they are so passionately attached to this world, they remain ambitious for wealth and possessions, and they regard everything and everyone around them as simply another opportunity for personal profit.

In fact, their main source of anxiety comes from looking at the problems without considering the Qur'an's morality. Their frustration is Allah's "reward" for their stubborn disbelief. They ignore His blessings and do not thank Him for them, so He sends anxiety their way. If they were not consumed with a passion for this world, if they appreciated what they have and thanked Him for them, they would be able to enjoy their possessions:

Let them laugh little and weep much, in repayment for what they have earned. (Surat at-Tawba: 82)

But if anyone turns away from My reminder, his life will be a dark and narrow one, and on the Day of Resurrection We will gather him blind. (Surah Ta Ha: 124)

People do not feel anxious or weary when they follow the Qur'an's morality. However, the enjoyment derived from doing something with worldly aims in mind is very limited and of short duration. When the benefits gained run out, their eagerness to continue subsides and the aim becomes regarded as a bother. But those who seek Allah's favor are rewarded with pleasure, for they know that they will be rewarded for their intention and not for the nature of the act. Therefore, they will never get bored with doing it:

Their [the sacrificial animals'] flesh and blood does not reach Allah, but your heedfulness does. In this way He has subjected them to you so that you might proclaim Allah's greatness for the way that He has guided you. Give good news to those who do good. (Surat al-Hajj: 37)

And so, no matter what they do, if they perform it in the hope of winning Allah's pleasure, and if they keep on doing so until the end of their lives, they will never get bored or lose their enjoyment in doing it again and again.

No matter how long they do that deed, their love and desire for earning Allah's favor will cause them to constantly create new and beautiful things on their horizon. Having rooted their morality in fear of Him, they form close relationships and friendships with those around them; have no desire for rank, position, or money; and are never jealous or anxious.

They cannot enjoy entertainment centers

Some people who are attached to this world know that life is short and so want to make the most of what time they have. There is nothing wrong with this, for Allah has endowed this life with so many good things so that we can enjoy them and thank Him. However, unbelievers think that they can obtain these good things through non-Qur'anic means and then enjoy them. By using methods of their own, or the techniques used in society in general, they assume that they can enjoy the best pleasures this Earthly life has to offer. One of these methods is "entertainment." But since they define entertainment according to their lifestyle and moral character, they cannot enjoy it properly, for "**Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace**" (Surat ar-Ra'd: 28).

Apart from this, it cannot matter what a person does. Even if he discovers the best and most colorful entertainments on Earth, he will never be able to take pleasure from any of them.

If you carefully examine the kinds of entertainment that ignorant people seek out, you will see once again the disappointment in which their search culminates. Those who do not follow the Qur'an's morality have a very limited idea of entertainment: They have based their lives on the expectations of others in an ignorant society, eager to gain a good position among them and earn their respect. As a result, in matters of entertainment, they strive to fit into some mould that society has already made and approved, rather than to seek enjoyments of their own. If left to their own choices, many people who seek out "popular" entertainment would much rather spend their time at home watching television, having a fine meal, looking at beautiful views, or talking with friends and other people. But no matter how much these private pastimes may please them, they do not allow themselves to enjoy them, in order to put on airs and gain respect. And so they go where everyone else goes for entertainment and opt for the same forms of entertainment. Therefore, unbelievers try to find enjoyment in going out to dinner with friends, going to the theater or the cinema, attending social activities organized by their school or professional colleagues, talking over coffee, or going to a club to dance and listen to music. Of course, some individuals may really enjoy these outings. But in order to enjoy them correctly, they must fear and respect Allah, believe in Him, and have a good moral character. Otherwise, all these good opportunities will simply make them anxious. They lead people into an environment where they will be swayed by the compulsions of an ignorant morality. So, when those whose spiritual state is far removed from religious morality assemble together, it becomes clear just how much they have disregarded this reality.

First off, as we saw above, ignorant people act according to the demands of their society rather than following their own tastes and inclinations. As to how they will entertain themselves, what films they will see and what restaurants, cafés or nightclubs they'll go out to, they base their decisions on their society's standards. They think that doing the chic and fashionable things that society approves of will earn them position, importance and respect in the eyes of others. For example, to be seen in a popular nightclub "where everyone goes" is very important for their self-respect. Even if they feel uncomfortable there, being able to tell colleagues or friends the next day that they had a good time at that popular place allows them to put on airs. When we look at these places of entertainment, we see that nothing in them appeals to the human spirit; rather, they make people weary and anxious. Most of these places are very crowded and full of stale air, due to the many people smoking. Given the noise, it is hard to hear what other people are saying. No matter how good the music is or how delicious the food is, the crowd and the noise make it impossible to enjoy them. Even if this place was invigorating, bright, clean, and well-appointed, the result would be the same, because the people who go there do not follow the Qur'an's morality and therefore are not content. In an environment filled with envy and rivalry, people cannot really enjoy themselves. This can take place only in a natural, intimate, friendly, and secure environment. However, they can hardly be content if they are constantly looking for faults in others and humiliate other people by criticizing their shortcomings. It's obvious that people who socialize with one another mainly to vent their envy and rivalry cannot enjoy any of their shared meals, their conversations, listening to music together or dancing. Instead, they will totally wear themselves out, both spiritually and physically. This is a fact that they themselves cannot deny.

Besides, the environment in which these ignorant people socialize is open to all sorts of dangers. No matter how carefully they make sure to select only entertainment of the highest quality, like it or not, they are forced to endure the company of people from segments of society quite different from their own. These people may have perverse attitudes, dark pasts and criminal personalities; they may be addicted to drugs and alcohol. This, of course, creates a tense atmosphere for those who only want to enjoy themselves. Therefore, being in the company of people they do not know – about whose past, lifestyle, moral character and personalities they know even less – makes it impossible for them to be comfortable enough to enjoy themselves.

People cannot feel safe in such an environment, because none of them fear and respect Allah. They do not worry that they will have to account to Him in the Hereafter, and so think, behave, and react according to their own ideas and principles; ignore all guidelines and limits except for their own opinions; and look for gain. For all these reasons, it is impossible to feel truly secure and comfortable wherever people with no faith in Allah meet together. How can anyone truly relax and enjoy themselves in such a dangerous and tense environment? Moreover, even though they know that they cannot enjoy themselves as they would like to, they do not want to understand that their problem comes from their lack of belief. They look for the solution in other forms of entertainment, but without success. Regardless of where they go, they encounter the same anxiety, tension, and boredom. Even if they seem to be enjoying themselves from an observer's point of view, from what we have said, it's clear that they can find no spiritual contentment or tranquility. Allah calls our attention to this fact:

No one disputes Allah's signs except those who do not believe. Do not let their free movement throughout the land deceive you. (Surah Ghafir: 4)

Do not be deceived by the fact that those who do not believe move freely throughout the land. A brief enjoyment; then their shelter will be Hell. What an evil resting place! (Surah Al 'Imran: 196-197)

Allah sends this misery to the unbelievers and does not allow them to enjoy themselves so that they will be consumed with disappointment. If believers find themselves in a similar environment, they remain content in the knowledge that they fear and respect Allah and that they follow the Qur'an's morality.

They cannot enjoy vacations

Unbelievers think that they can escape their unpleasant lives by going on vacation. If they cannot afford to do so, people in almost every segment of society seek to create themselves a holiday environment, according to their tastes and material income. Some stay at home and relax; others take advantage of their time off to take short day trips. Even though their choices of where to go may be radically different, their common goal is to take a respite from the work they have had to do throughout the year and spend their time more enjoyably by doing something quite different.

And so they start to save money, dreaming about their upcoming vacation. They plan every detail in advance; they carefully select the clothes they will wear and ensure that wherever they stay will have all they need to keep them comfortable. And in order for their limited time to be even more enjoyable, often they make arrangements for their good friends to go with them. And yet many times such plans come to nothing, for the vacation does not turn out as expected. Sometimes, people come back even more physically and mentally worn out than they were before they left.

There are certain reasons for this. For example, Allah tests people by creating apparent adversities as well as some environments that appeal to their lower selves, "**We test you with both good and evil as a trial. And you will be returned to Us**" (Surat al-Anbiya': 35). So, according to Allah's wisdom, human beings encounter pleasant and unpleasant things in the course of their lives. If they demonstrate a good moral character in the face of adversities, Allah turns events that at first glance seemed to be negative, difficult or trying into the means to something good and positive. Therefore, anyone who acts from this point of view will be content in every moment of his life. He will appreciate the good things he has and be happy with them. But a person with an ignorant moral character, facing these trying situations that Allah has created, will not see anything good in these apparently negative occurrences. He will be far from content and, because of this peevish moral attitude, will not be able to enjoy the good things he does possess.

In environments where the high morality attained through the fear of Allah is absent, people cannot be content with themselves, nor can they enjoy all the good things that are offered to them. This

is because where there is no trust in Allah, there is no ability to see the good in every occurrence, and none of the maturity needed to endure apparent adversities and wrong attitudes. And where people cannot solve their problems without getting overcome with anger, an ignorant attitude takes over, subjecting them to great anxiety. So this is why some people cannot derive the pleasure they expect from their holiday, despite all their best efforts. And so it is with other aspects of their lives. If a few short examples of the problems likely to be encountered in such holiday outings were given, it would be clear that these people feel unhappy only because of their own moral characters.

In any holiday environment, the disappointment encountered most frequently is that the place is different than people had expected it would be. The fact that their accommodations are smaller than they imagined is enough to dissipate their enjoyment from the beginning. Add to this that they may have had a difficult voyage getting there, making them particularly impatient. Their discontent at being in an unfamiliar place they do not like only adds to their inability to tolerate its lack of amenities or facilities, making them feel truly depressed. Adding to their unhappiness is their superstitious idea that anything that begins badly will likely continue in the same vein.

Sometimes they do find a situation totally to their liking. But should even one unexpected thing happen to them in the course of their holiday, all their enjoyment vanishes. For example, they go somewhere to sunbathe and it starts to rain, the availability of electricity or water is irregular, the swimming pool is crowded, or there are no good tables left in the restaurant. Believers who experience these same conditions, however, view them as sources of enjoyment through the eyes of belief. No matter how disagreeable a situation may be, they will see many things for which to thank Allah and will know how to be content with them. For example, the weather may not be sunny, but there are other interesting things to do when it rains. Or, the swimming pool may be crowded, but they can busy themselves in outdoor sports, hiking, or shopping. The table in the restaurant may not be the best, but there are friends to talk to sitting at the next table. They remain calm in all of the situations mentioned above, for reacting to them negatively only makes them miserable. Knowing this, they adopt a positive and mature attitude toward such circumstances.

In fact, unbelievers are unhappy even when they are in a perfect environment, for their spiritual corruption, inner discontent, and non-Qur'anic moral character prevents them from enjoying those blessings. If they do not know how to thank Him for what they have or how to look positively at everything that happens; if they are intolerant and unforgiving of other people's mistakes; and if they are not self-giving and modest, they will never be able to enjoy any of His blessings. But if they have the fear and respect of Allah in their hearts, they will possess all of these good moral qualities and Allah will enable them to experience the joys of this life.

Being bored with their possessions

In the Qur'an, Allah tells us that His blessings do the unbelievers no good:

So leave them in their glut of ignorance for a while. Do they imagine that, in the wealth and children We extend to them, We are hastening to them with good things? No indeed, but they have no awareness. (Surat al-Mu'minun: 54-56)

Unbelievers may spend their lives surrounded by wealth, beauty, honor, fame, and respect. But none of these things does them any good or becomes a blessing for them, and they will only experience increased agony in both worlds. On the surface it seems that Allah gives them blessings, but He does not enable them to enjoy them. Therefore, even though the blessings are all around them, they are, nevertheless, deprived of them. A person can possess everything he wants, but it becomes a great misery for him not to be able to enjoy what he already has.

We must remember that they know the reason for this: their failure to abide by the Qur'an's morality. They vehemently deny this, of course. And instead of seeking the solution in faith and taking refuge in Allah, they try to escape their boredom by changing their habits, attitudes, social circles, friends, and the places they frequent. They hope that then, everything will be all right again, and they will have saved their lives from emptiness and their hearts from uneasiness. We have all heard people around us say things like the following: "I want to start a new life," "I'll start from zero," and "I'm going to wipe out the past and turn over a new page." Even if they manage to start completely new lives, however, they cannot find the meaning, excitement, or happiness that they are seeking. For example, they take painting or sculpture art lessons, thinking that it will give them pleasure to create works of art that express their personality. But they soon discover that any such pleasure is not forthcoming. They try everything to boost their egos, find adulation among their peers, and earn a good reputation in their society. They attend meetings, accept a position in a charitable organization, go to exhibitions, concerts and the theatre; they go shopping, try different kinds of sports, and set up meetings with their friends. But after a short time they get bored with these things as well; they cannot find the excitement for which they are looking. Nothing has changed, because their spirit had not changed. Only if these members of ignorant society abandon their unseemly characters and adopt the high morality that Allah has commanded can they become happy and content.

Some think that money and what it can buy will make them happy and so concentrate on earning it. But acquiring a better car, a nicer house, a better position, or more comfort will never satisfy them, for they are filled with the desire to have more. For example, some people have a passion for cars. It is very important that their car is a good make and the latest model; it has to have good engineering and a quality music system. They grow very emotionally attached to their auto and do not want it to have the slightest dent or scratch. But their satisfaction from driving a nice car does not last long. Soon a new model comes out, and theirs becomes an outdated model. It pains them to read that a faster car with more accessories and more advanced engineering is now on the market, and in an instant moment they lose all the pleasure they had in their once-coveted possession. Also, their wardrobe becomes a major problem for ignorant people. Some people want to follow the latest clothing fashions, even though they may not have enough money to do so. They buy an outfit that they like and find attractive, but stop liking it when it goes out of style or they see it on someone they do not like or, even worse, a rival. The outfit abruptly loses its appeal and becomes a source of irritation. In much the same way, seeing

someone wearing nicer clothing than theirs makes them quite miserable. No matter how nice their own outfits are, they are worried that they are no more than ordinary, which makes them unhappy. Their habits, social activities, material means, or possessions will not make them happy, and their constant search for more will make them even more miserable. When they realize that they have really consumed and wasted all of this life's pleasures, they generally get "angry at life." Unwilling to solve their problems through belief, they remain mired in confusion and unhappiness. Therefore, in spite of all their efforts, they remain confused and unhappy. However, if they practiced religious morality, they would have a joy deeper than they could imagine.

Believers see this very clearly in their lives. Having escaped from boredom and anxiety, they find their spirits deepening more every day and thus acquire an even better understanding of the value of the blessings that Allah bestows upon them. Their joy and contentment increase, for they understand that these blessings are manifestations of Allah's mercy, love, and kindness toward them. Because they live their lives totally for Allah, use their every advantage to win His favor and do everything to please Him, they continually experience the same deep joy and excitement. In the Qur'an, Allah reveals the enduringly tranquil spiritual state of those who have faith in Him:

O self at rest and at peace, return to your Lord, well-pleasing and well-pleased. Enter among My servants. Enter My Garden. (Surat al-Fajr: 27-30)

They cannot take pleasure in natural beauty

The unbelievers' materialistic way of thinking renders them incapable of sensing the beauty of nature. They look at almost everything around them in terms of how it can benefit them and how they can make more of this life. This searching for gain is so much a part of their character that they think that something nice has meaning only if it brings them adulation and respect. This limited vision prevents them from noticing all of the natural beauty bedecking every part of creation, and so their appreciation of it is only superficial.

But Allah has endowed the whole world with splendid natural beauty to please the human spirit and so that we can think about Him, see His great power, believe in Him, and thank Him. No matter where we live, all of us have some connection with much of this beauty. The rain, waves beating on the shore, a sunset, or the sight of a budding flower all give deep satisfaction to the human spirit. All parts of creation leave an impression on people and bring them blessings. Looking through the eyes of belief, believers know that Allah has created all of these beautiful things for them. And so they notice them down to their finest details and derive a deep enjoyment from them. Those who view the world with heedless eyes see it through a veil of heedlessness. For this reason, the majority of ignorant people do not notice the beautiful things around them; and what they do notice does not have much meaning for them. As far as they are concerned, there might as well be a shroud over the various wonderful blessings that surround them. In the Qur'an, our Lord describes the state of those who have eyes but cannot see:

It is not their eyes that are blind, but the hearts in their breasts that are blind. (Surat al-Hajj: 46)

They have hearts with which they do not understand. They have eyes with which they do not see. They have ears with which they do not hear. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A‘raf: 179)

Elsewhere, Allah describes the radiant delight in the faces of those believers who take pleasure in their blessings (Surat al-Mutaffifin: 24). In another verse, He reveals:

Clear insights have come to you from your Lord. Whoever sees clearly, does so to his own benefit. Whoever is blind, it is to his own detriment. I am not here as your keeper. (Surat al-An‘am: 104)

So those who look heedlessly at the beauty around them can see it only as if behind a curtain. Of course, people who live amid some natural beauty will look to take advantage of it when necessary. For example, they may enjoy going to the seaside to watch a sunset or look at flowers and trees, but their enjoyment is limited. They have no sense of delight deep in their hearts. They experience only an ordinary and fleeting sense of pleasure that quickly gives way to insensitivity, disinterest, and boredom. Within a short time they want something new, more interesting, and more original. This is a sign of the debasement and insensitivity of their spirits. There are unbelievers who say that they love nature and want to live in it; some of them even have spent a large part of their lives doing so. But, how do they measure the pleasure that they derive from natural beauty?

Believers know that this measure depends upon their ability to feel Allah’s power and greatness, seeing their own littleness compared to His splendid creation, and sincerely submitting themselves to Him. Allah allows only those who see this truth and can live according to it to take genuine pleasure in these beautiful things. Even though they live amid all this loveliness, some people can never escape the emptiness in their hearts, their inner discontent and unhappiness. This only shows their inability to enjoy this beauty properly. As long as they do not have faith in Allah, beauty can give them only a fleeting sense of delight and hold their interest for only a short time.

But a person who knows that Allah has created all the beautiful things around him can better understand the meaning behind it. He will discover its deeper aspects and experience delight in each discovery. As a result, he can feel the deep pleasure that comes from having a sense of Allah’s supreme qualities, greatness, endless creative artistry, infinite knowledge and wisdom, and dominion over all of creation. This person would not need to visit all the countries of the world to see their natural beauty. The richness and depth of his own spirit would allow him to take pleasure in the countless small sights that he is accustomed to as he goes back and forth each day. This produces a great sense of delight in the depths of his being.

For example, Allah has created animals as a blessing for human beings. Countless kinds of birds glide gracefully through the air, their beautiful wings, bright colors, and symmetrical feathers give

pleasure to all of those who look at them through the eyes of belief. The way a pretty little squirrel uses its teeth, moves its paws, and flicks its tail awakens a strong sense of compassion in each believer's heart. This is also the case when they see a cute little rabbit using its paws to eat a carrot, the designs on a zebra's body, the magnificence of a galloping horse, the beauty of a gazelle, and the countless features of all animals. The same applies to the bright greenness of a forest, the magnificence of a waterfall, the sight of mountain peaks piercing the clouds, and the countless types of trees, flowers, fruits and vegetables. Witnessing these manifestations of His supreme knowledge and creative artistry, they thank Him.

All believers have an unlimited capacity to take pleasure in natural beauty, a pleasure that grows due to the deepening of their spirit and belief. This is a pleasure that Allah gives only to those who approach Him in sincerity; He gives it only to believers in return for their ability to see everything through the eyes of faith. Those who deny Allah lose enjoyment of these beautiful things in this world and will not have them in the world to come. In the next world, they will have only misery. In the Qur'an, Allah calls our attention to this reality:

Abandon those who have turned their religion into a game and a diversion, and who have been deluded by the life of this world. Remind by it, lest a person is delivered up to destruction for what he has earned with no protector or intercessor besides Allah. Were he to offer every kind of compensation, it would not be accepted. Such people are delivered up to destruction for what they have earned. They will have scalding water to drink and a painful punishment because they did not believe. (Surat al-An'am: 70)

They are unable to take pleasure in cleanliness

Cleanliness reveals an individual's personality, moral character, way of thinking, and intelligence. Allah mentions its importance in the Qur'an:

Purify your clothes. Shun all filth. (Surat al-Muddaththir: 4-5)

But cleanliness is a quality found only among those who have genuine faith. Like other moral qualities, cleanliness can be achieved only through the fear of Allah. This is because anyone who fears Allah knows that, even when he is alone by himself, Allah sees everything he does and that in the world to come, he will receive a reward for this act. He also knows that he will receive a recompense for everything he has contrary to the voice of his conscience. For this reason, he will avoid any action that displeases Allah and which is pronounced in the Qur'an to be wrong. In his daily life, he practices the kind of cleanliness that Allah describes in the Qur'an as a form of worship. It means taking pleasure from being in clean places, using clean things and associating with clean people. Of course, unbelievers have their own understanding of cleanliness. Some of them are known for their meticulous tidiness and cleanliness, but this does not come from their fear and respect of Allah or their desire to win His favor.

Therefore, this cleanliness is due to what society expects from its members. These people miss a great deal by not leading their lives in conformity with the understanding of cleanliness revealed in the Qur'an, and from their inability to feel the need for it. In response to their rejection of faith, Allah has taken this pleasure from their spirits and obliged them to live in an unpleasing environment.

Unbelievers are aware of two kinds of cleanliness: the visible and the invisible. They place the most importance on the first kind, such as physical cleanliness and clean clothing. However, outward cleanliness always has an unseen side, for unbelievers, when they are alone or think that no one else sees them, often behave quite differently than they do in public. It is impossible to guess what they do when they are alone, for others cannot discern what is (and what is not) important to them, because anyone who does not fear Allah decides what is right and wrong according to his own ideas.

Many such people look at their physical cleanliness and the cleanliness of their homes from the outside, and measure it according to whether or not they notice any dirt. They put off bathing, doing the laundry, ironing, changing sheets and towels, and tidying up because these chores bore them. They clean and organize their closets only when they have to. Some mix their dirty and clean clothes together and wear them again. Generally, if they can afford it, they pay someone to come in once a week to do the cleaning. Apart from this, they do not bother to clean the bathroom, the floors, and dust in the corners, or the mess in their bedrooms.

Some people are often physically dirty. They get tired of washing themselves and, especially when the weather is cold, wash only their hair. They do not care about their physical dirtiness, because no one can see it. Women have their hairdressers "do" their hair and do not feel the need to wash it until their perm comes out. These people try to cover up their dirty bodies by using heavy perfumes and deodorants, but this is far more off-putting. They think it is normal to smell cigarette smoke, food, or sweat. They may always seem outwardly clean, and their clothes may appear ironed and spotless. But they are not really clean, because they harbor a warped understanding of what real cleanliness is. For example, they may get some dust on their clothes or spill something on their sleeve, which might not cause a permanent stain, and they do not consider it unclean at all. They may get their hands dirty or greasy from eating, but do not wash them immediately afterward. They think that no one sees them preparing their meals and may easily use a ladle they have not washed or some morsel that has fallen on the dirty kitchen countertop or even on the floor. They may use unwashed utensils and dirty pots. In the same way, they do not trouble themselves about the cleanliness of their bathrooms and so endanger their own health and of those they live with.

We could say much more about what such people might do. If asked, they would say they had not noticed that their clothing, hair, hands or faces were dirty. This is because they regard that situation as entirely normal. Even if they make those around them uncomfortable or even endanger their health, they will refuse to admit as much. We must not forget that this is a recompense that Allah gives to the ignorant society. In a sense, those who refuse to come to faith receive payment for the harm they have done with their own distorted moral understanding.

Another widespread misconception is that not paying attention to cleanliness is an aspect of modernity. Such people think that anyone who interferes with their dirtying of the environment is old-fashioned. And, because they impel one another to think this way, they hesitate to criticize it, even

though they know that such a lifestyle is wrong. For example, they enter their homes wearing dirty shoes and are content to leave their sofas and carpets covered with dust and dirt. And if someone else enters their house and dirties their carpets with their dirty shoes, they do not care; to protest would be embarrassing.

This distorted way of thinking can be seen among young people. They think it is alright to sleep in the same clothes they wore all day. It is normal for them to eat a greasy sandwich, not wash their hands, and then rub the grease over their hair and their clothing. If muddy water splashes on their clothes, they just wipe it off and continue on their way. They believe that the dirtier, more stained, and worn out their leather jacket is, the more “cool” it is. Their jeans become virtual breeding grounds for germs and bacteria. This same tendency is seen among those who equate intellectualism with modernism. They think that their shabby lifestyle and manner of dress gives them an air of being different and superior. You cannot go near them because their bodies and clothing exude cigarette smoke, and you cannot look them in the eye because of their long, dirty, and messy hair and unkempt beards. In fact, they are repulsive. They think that if they were clean and tidy, and if they were having a conversation in a bright, airy, and pleasant atmosphere, they would lose their aura of intellectualism and be just like everyone else.

Such an unhealthy lifestyle has both spiritual and physical effects. Since they live in a dirty environment, they often get sick; living in an airless, dusty, and filthy place destroys their lungs and ruins their skin. Sometimes it even turns yellow. In time, they lose their ability to appreciate beauty and good looks, their hearts harden and become unable to take pleasure in fine things, and their spirits become debased.

For believers, however, cleanliness is both an act of worship and a blessing that gives them great spiritual pleasure, contentment, refreshment, comfort, and confidence. Among believers, believers can have peace of mind, sit where they want, and use implements and utensils without hesitation or uneasiness. They know that every believer fears and respects Allah, that they do not violate the Qur'an's morality, that they act the same way both in public and in private, and that they always behave with impeccable purity in every situation, just as Allah commands. They do their best to ensure that those around them enjoy the same level of comfort, health, and security that they do. Their conscience makes them accept this as a responsibility and avoid anything that might harm others. They take great pleasure in trying to create environments in this world that are reminiscent of Paradise.

LOST SPIRITUAL PLEASURES

Love is a great blessing that unbelievers throw away

Love is one of the deepest, most intense emotions that a person can experience. It is also one of the most wonderful blessings that Allah has created for human beings in this world. Human beings take great pleasure in the material and spiritual gifts that Allah has created for them: They take pleasure in beautiful views, comfortable houses, good music, and fine cooking. But none of these satisfactions can compare with the happiness that love gives.

In order to experience love to the fullest, certain conditions are necessary. First of all, an individual must be able to see the good qualities in others and appreciate their fine points. The more open is an individual's mind and conscience, the stronger his ability to love. But the only factor that can give him this ability is his faith and fear of Allah. Therefore, a person is able to experience love according to the measure of his faith and fear of Allah; and to that extent, he may take pleasure in it.

In the same way, in order for him to love another, that person must have qualities that can be loved – and again, these qualities arise from faith and the fear of Allah. The deeper an individual's faith in Allah, and the more he fears Allah, the more lovable qualities he possesses. This is because the one who fears Allah has a good moral character; and along with the fear of Allah develop mercy, tolerance, reliability, courage, self-sacrifice, intelligence and good conscience. All these qualities naturally create a deep and strong sense of love in the heart of anyone who sees with the eyes of faith. But if these conditions, faith and fear of Allah, are absent – that is, if the basis of love is absent – then no one can experience true love.

The basic source of the love that believers feel for others is their love of Allah. The knowledge that Allah creates the joy that comes from their heart-felt love for others, as a manifestation of Himself, gives that love its depth. But since the love of unbelievers is founded on their expectation of gain, they can never truly experience love. They only love those who are useful to them, make them comfortable, and do for them what they consider to be favors. But such love rests on crumbling foundations and can never become sincere and heart-felt love. In reality, they love themselves more than others and, thinking that they are more valuable than others, want others to do them favors, protect them, and take an interest in them.

As long as they get this attention, they feel a certain sense of love. But most often, this type of love does not make others happy or feel loved, for it is false and directed toward gain. Being no more than a polite pretense for the sake of other people's feelings, it ends when the goal is achieved. Naturally, they cannot show any sincere affection, no matter how often they express their love. All they can do is to mouth the stereotyped words and phrases generally available for this purpose and used on special days set apart for expressions of love. However, believers can express true love toward others with sincere, moving, and wonderful words, because the joy of love is alive in their hearts. Indeed, believers who sincerely honor and love their beloved will never do or say anything to harm that person.

Above all, this type of love does not depend upon circumstances or any expected reward from people. True love expects a reward only from Allah, for its sole purpose is to win His favor.

Unbelievers think that love grows weak over time due to mutual boredom and a loss of enthusiasm. Of course, many relationships end this way among the unbelievers, for their love was based upon falsity and was never true. In true love, time always plays a positive role, for it enables each person to better appreciate the other's compassion, mercy, generosity, consideration, self-sacrifice, and other good qualities. Their love grows stronger over time as their personalities, moral understanding, and attitudes develop toward perfection. There is never any boredom or frustration in true love, and good looks, material means, and prestige become irrelevant. The only important thing is the beloved's moral character. But unbelievers, who judge everything by material standards, suffer material loss when that foundation collapses.

We can see that unbelievers have a broken faith in their hearts. For this reason, they live in a loveless world and cannot derive pleasure from the things that give the most joy to the human spirit. More importantly, since these people cannot know true love or how to love and be loved, they will not experience this blessing in Paradise, which is a place filled with the love of Allah. There, people will know how to love and experience the eternal joy of being loved. In the Qur'an, Allah tells us of the blessings that await believers in Paradise as a reward for their good moral character. One of these will be a passionate love shared by two partners. In the following verses, Allah describes what Paradise is like:

... on sumptuous woven couches, reclining on them face to face. There will circulate among them, ageless youths, carrying goblets and decanters and a cup from a flowing spring – it does not give them any headache, nor does it leave them stupefied. And any fruit they specify and any bird-meat they desire. And dark-eyed maidens like hidden pearls. As recompense for what they did. They will hear no prattling in it, nor any word of wrong. All that is said is: "Peace! Peace!" And the Companions of the Right: what of the Companions of the Right? Amid thorn-less lotus-trees, fruit-laden acacias, wide-spreading shade, outpouring water, and fruits in abundance never failing, unrestricted. And on elevated couches. We have brought maidens into being and made them the purest virgins, devoted, passionate, of like age, for the Companions of the Right. (Surat al-Waqi'a: 15-38)

The loss of loyalty and faithfulness

As we have said from the beginning of this book, the ignorant base their behavior on getting all they can out of life and the other people around them. This shallow goal drives them to evaluate everything from the point of view of gain – and to this end they are prepared to sacrifice almost everything, including many of the very things they value the most and everyone they claim to love. Therefore, it is impossible for these people to experience true loyalty and faithfulness.

In their passionate pursuit of money, possessions, and property, unbelievers forget the importance of feeling love, respect, and loyalty. They think, mistakenly, that material things will make them much

happier. However, as we said earlier, none of these things will bring them the contentment they seek. No matter how much respect, fame and renown they have in society and no matter how much property and how many possessions they have, none of these things can buy them true human friendship and loyalty. Bereft of these values, they can never truly make friends with anyone because they always ask themselves on what basis and according to what criteria they should choose their friends. Instead of looking for friends who fear and respect Allah and follow the Qur'an's morality, they look for people who can benefit them and cause them to be respected in the eyes of their associates.

People who live in a good part of a city need to choose friends who live in a similar area. They must be wealthy, attractive and good-looking, have a new car, come from a good family, or have a respected name. For those who live in a more modest neighborhood, a future friend must at least be respected there: he or she must be a graduate of a good school, have a respectable profession, be noticeably attractive and good-looking, and be strong enough to ensure polite treatment. But none of these qualities allow a mutual sense of loyalty and faithfulness to grow. In such friendships, backbiting, betrayal, sacrificing a "friend" for a particular gain are quite common. In the same way, if one friend gets into material or psychological problems and needs help, it may end the friendship, given that the others may be unwilling to help out because it will not profit them to do so. Thus, the best solution is to abandon their friend and look for someone to fill the gap who will be useful to them.

We can see this faithlessness among married unbelievers. Indeed, they often speak of how they have been treated unjustly in this regard. There is so much unfaithfulness among spouses that it is no longer considered surprising. When they get married, couples promise to be faithful to each other in good times and bad, that they will not desert each other, and that they will care for and protect each other. But these promises are soon broken, and other ways to ensure faithfulness must be found. Some do it through prenuptial contracts to protect their property. In order to avoid potential material or emotional difficulties, they sign contracts as to who will get what if they decide to divorce. This makes it clear how these two parties regard each other. Clearly, their love, respect, and friendship is not based on faithfulness and loyalty, for right from the outset they accept the possibility that they will not always remain husband and wife. Such a shaky relationship is always in danger of ending.

Instances of disloyalty are often seen in their professional lives. To make more money, they may deceive one another or even steal money from others. Many unbelievers complain that their relationships with their friends have been broken for this reason and thus do not like to get involved in doing business with their relatives. This disloyalty can also be seen in society as a whole. Often, society treats certain people with respect and appreciation, and they receive praise and adulation from the people. But when they lose their usefulness, they also lose this love and respect. Examples of this kind of disloyalty can be observed almost everywhere. Orphanages, old people's homes, and addiction treatment centers are places where this disloyalty is most clearly reflected. When people who were once useful to others and loved and respected lose whatever made them the objects of such attention, they are abandoned and left alone even by their children, grandchildren, and relatives. Parents may spend years and much effort bringing up their children but, because they do not follow the Qur'an's morality, the children may leave their parents alone in their old age.

Over time, society forgets those who have served it well in the fields of politics, culture, or education. During the school years, families and students show great respect toward teachers, obey them, and try to ingratiate themselves with them. But as soon as school is finished, students forget their teachers because their usefulness has ended. The point to remember here is that the disloyalty and unfaithfulness encountered by unbelievers is, in fact, a reflection of their own “moral” character. Leading their lives according to their own guidelines and moral systems, they get the reward of not being attached to anyone with any real loyalty or faithfulness.

However, a society made up of believers who follow the Qur'an's morality has none of these worries. Believers love one another without regard for gain, youth, or health. The only measure of their love is the others' sincere love for Allah and their good moral character. If these are in place, it does not matter if a person becomes old, needy, or unable to earn money. Believers will continue to treat him with sincere love and respect. In fact, true loyalty and faithfulness come only from adhering to the Qur'an's moral teachings. Those who love one another out of their love for Allah are steadfast in their friendships and in showing love and respect. Only they can understand the pleasure that comes from a sense of loyalty and faithfulness.

The loss of admiration and respect for others

Respect indicates people's love for each other and the value placed upon them. The good qualities seen in others draw a deep sense of respect toward them. But a good character can only come from following the Qur'an's morality, and a mature, reliable, and stable moral character that can be sustained under all circumstances can only be achieved by fearing Allah.

Of course, ignorant societies have a certain concept of respect, but their understanding is based on a false foundation. Those who live according to ignorant criteria show love and respect to those whom they think are their superiors. If another person is richer, more respected, more talked about, noticed and has an enviable career, that is an ignorant society's basis for respect. To such a society's understanding, a person's moral character, whether or not he performs good works, and his attitude towards others around him are seen as unimportant. Even if they acquired their wealth and renown from questionable or illicit sources, they are treated with respect and admiration by some segments of society. But this is not true respect or admiration, for it is based on how others think they can benefit from them.

From the beginning of this book, we have stressed that because these individuals reject Allah, they cannot properly appreciate another's good moral character, refined intellect or any other admirable qualities. For this same reason, they cannot feel any natural love or admiration in their hearts. On the contrary, it annoys them if only for the sake of gain, they must feign respect for someone they do not like. In fact, people who do not practice religious morality always want themselves to be superior, respected and admired. They want to have the last word and tell others what to do. And it hurts their pride if they must compromise their egos, even temporarily, for the sake of anyone else.

The interesting thing here is that the person on the receiving end of the false respect is aware of the situation. He knows that the other doesn't really respect him, but uses the material power he has, pretending not to notice so that he can use the false respect to his advantage.

Believers, on the other hand, who are not governed by insincerity, sincerely love each other because of the fine moral qualities they see in each other. Therefore, their respect is unchanging. The Qur'an tells believers to respect each other, and thus they do their best to practice this high morality in order to win His favor. They act in the knowledge that false respect is unacceptable in Allah's sight and that He will recompense them according to what is in their hearts.

It is rare to find such respect and admiration among unbelievers. Some individuals may be disrespectful toward their parents, who brought them up in difficulties. Others may show great disrespect to elderly people they meet on the street by harassing them or making fun of the weakness caused by their age and ill health. However, Allah advises believers to be compassionate, giving, respectful toward the homeless, the poor, prisoners, parents, and orphans. And so sincere believers do their best to respect the elderly and be patient when their parents become needy and weakened by age. In the Qur'an, Allah reveals these commands to believers:

Your Lord has decreed that you should worship none but Him, and that you should show kindness to your parents. Whether one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say "Ugh!" to them out of irritation and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them with gentleness and generosity. (Surat al-Isra': 23)

Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him. Be good to your parents and relatives, to orphans and the very poor, to neighbors who are related to you and neighbors who are not related to you, and to companions, travelers, and your slaves. Allah does not love anyone who is vain or boastful. (Surat al-Nisa': 36)

They can never know the joys of friendship

Everyone is always looking for a good friend, someone with whom to share happiness, who will be a support in difficult times, and help find answers to difficult problems. Everyone wants to find someone who will offer unconditional love, loyalty, concern, understanding, and comfort during times of illness and in old age. But because such people are hard to find, most people are content to find just one good friend.

Of course, finding a true friend is a real blessing. Such friends are with you in good times and bad, want for you what they want for themselves, want you to be happy and to have the best as much as they want those things for themselves. In other words, such friends are never jealous of each other. Among their qualities is the desire that their friends be happy in both worlds. They are open and honest with each other about their faults and show them how to overcome them. People generally think this is an aggressive attitude; however, only a true friend would do it. Those who have a sense of rivalry or

envy toward another will not point out other people's mistakes if they do not have to, because they do not want the other person to be better than they are. And so they flatter them: "You're very good," "Don't change," and "Always stay the way you are." In order to be a good friend, you must be able to love your friends for their lovable qualities: their fear and respect of Allah, sincerity, and good moral character. Only a friendship founded on these values is lasting. So, even though their desire to do so may be great, those of an ignorant moral character most often cannot find any good friends. No doubt you have heard people make complaints similar to these: "I'm very lonely." "I don't have a single friend," and "Everyone has gone away and left me in the lurch. I guess they were fair-weather friends."

Friendships based upon wealth, beauty, respect, position, or social status are never long-lasting, for conditions change. As soon as the conditions on which the friendship is based are changed in any way, the friendship itself comes to an end. For example, unbelievers may associate with someone who is attractive and good-looking. But if this person's looks change due to an accident and needs to be looked after, the friendship ends. However, if their friendship was based on their mutual fear and respect of Allah, faith, and high morality, any physical change could not alter it. On the contrary, a real friend would feel even more compassion.

Unbelievers also suffer from this disloyalty themselves. For example, they may lose their looks, youth, health, wealth, and possessions and soon find themselves abandoned by those who they thought were real friends. In good times, these people were close and intimate and promised to be faithful until death; but now, they pretend not to know one another. They have no one with whom to share their problems, no one they can trust, ask for advice and assistance. They discover that their friends liked them only for what benefit they could provide.

However, believers live in an environment permeated by the fear of Allah and belief, all of which create feelings of love and respect. Those who do not follow the Qur'an's morality and know one another's unseemly moral character cannot trust or feel true love and respect for others. How can you love someone who you know is a liar and a hypocrite and who uses others for his own benefit? Even if you treat them as close and intimate friends, you know that their friendship is insincere because they have some ulterior motive in mind. This lifestyle, the product of unbelief, is a real dead end. They know this and always complain about the pleasures they have lost, and yet still do not seek happiness in belief or following the Qur'an's morality. They will never solve their difficulties, because they look for solutions based upon unbelief.

They cannot enjoy the pleasures that come with being sincere

Sincere people are always the same, whether others see them or not, for what they feel and experience inside is reflected on the outside. They are honest, open and straightforward, do not hide their thoughts and true feelings, show their true character without being calculating, and present themselves as they truly are. Sincerity gives rise to trust and binds people together in love and respect. Allah has created human beings so that, if they practice the Qur'an's morality, they will live in

contentment, happiness, and ease. Thus, those who are not sincere lose the respect of others and, as a result, cannot love or respect their supposed friends and close associates. Living a public life that is the opposite of their private life, and basing their public life on deceit, dishonesty, and pretense, engenders anxiety and falsehood toward even those considered to be their close friends.

Unbelievers live this kind of anxiety-ridden life, one devoid of the pleasure of intimacy. Having no experience in their hearts of love, respect, and compassion, they can only imitate these feelings. Their pretense is obvious, however, for what people feel inside is necessarily reflected in their attitudes. Sincere love cannot be hidden, for it is obvious in one's face, appearance, manner, and attitude. In the same way, one's inner anger and dislike is reflected in one's facial expressions, choice of words, and the emphases of sentences. The ignorant harm only themselves by this kind of behavior. They approach others with insincerity, under false pretenses and those whom they address direct the same insincerity back at them. All their lives, as we said earlier, they have longed for an honest and sincere friend, but they have never been able to find such a blessing – because of the warped moral understanding that dominates their society. They cannot be a genuine friend to anyone, and cannot experience any warm, close relationships. They will relate to their closest friends, spouses and even their parents with the same insincerity.

However, being honest, sincere, and having a transparent and sincere spirit brings great pleasure, for human beings were created to live in such a manner. For this reason, those who behave according to their own innate nature derive great pleasure from the quietness of their conscience. Even if they know that they will suffer some setback, the pleasure derived from their quiet conscience will never falter. But unbelievers who make no effort to be honest are sunk in their own negative moral qualities, afraid that other people will learn of their true qualities. Therefore, they conceal their true thoughts and feelings as much as they can. Believers, on the other hand, do not hesitate to show the good qualities in their hearts. If they think something good about someone, they tell that person openly; if they think something negative, they explain their feelings in a way that will be beneficial for the other person, for Allah tells believers to call people to good and dissuade them from evil:

Those who repent, those who worship, those who praise, those who fast, those who bow, those who prostrate, those who command the right, those who forbid the wrong, and those who preserve the limits of Allah: give good news to the believers. (Surat at-Tawba: 112)

Unbelievers believe that they will suffer if they show any understanding of honesty. However, this is an important source of love for people who live the same honesty and sincerity. None of the compliments and attention can create the love, closeness, and trust that sincerity puts in the heart. So, they consume the pleasures that these good qualities give to the spirit, for their own distorted ideas make them find duplicity and false pretense more attractive. Again, it is they themselves who suffer the most from what they believe; and even though they are deceived their whole life by those around them, they do not renounce their ideas. In the Qur'an, Allah tells us that those who deny Him realize that there is no other solution but religious morality. But the deniers are determined to live in their own distorted system, and in return, they suffer:

Who hears the signs of Allah recited to him and then persists in his arrogance just as if he had never heard them. Give him the news of a painful punishment. (Surat al-Jathiyya: 8)

[They were] persisting in immense wrongdoing. (Surat al-Waqi'a: 46)

They have lost the satisfactions of behaving in a moral way

Everyone likes to see mature moral attitudes that accord with those taught by the Qur'an, to be treated well, to have their failures tolerated, to be treated fairly if a problem arises, and to be approached with humble warmth despite the level of their arrogance. No matter how unacceptable their behavior is, they want others to be patient with them, offer help when they need it, forgive their mistakes regardless of their constant nature, and treat them with respect. When this does not happen, they become very irritated and never stop complaining that humanity is dead, people are not the way they used to be, everyone only thinks of themselves, and that people can no longer feel any human emotions in this material world. Despite these accusations, they make no effort to treat others in any better way. They want others to treat them kindly, while they think only of themselves. They want hardships to fall on others rather than on themselves, and because of their ignorant beliefs, they avoid moral behavior. At the root of this backward logic lies a lack of fear of Allah; as a result, these people act only for the sake of gain, rather than heeding the voice of their conscience.

Only belief and one's fear and respect of Allah can bring about a good moral character. Otherwise, one's good behavior is always calculated and intermittent. For example, when he feels that he can profit from some transaction, he may appear to set his ignorant morality aside; he may seem suddenly generous and tolerant, but is led into this apparent moral behavior by the profit he expects to gain. This distorted way of thinking is very harmful. No matter how much such people seem to belittle worldly gain and renounce any selfish, intolerant and unjust behavior; their unseemly moral behavior does great damage to their spirits. Every time they do something against their conscience, they become more confused and empty within, and more spiritually lost. Every day they have opportunities to act in a positive way, but they always misuse these opportunities. Their consciences become desensitized. Nothing moves them, and they can commit the worst actions without the slightest pang of conscience.

They want to live a good life in a beautiful world without working for it: "**Humanity never tires of praying for the good**" (Surah Fussilat: 49). But without work, nothing good can be produced. When the question of working toward a good moral character comes up, they say: "This is the way I am" or "I can't change at this age." But this individual's personality is not a function of his age or the way he was brought up. He simply wants to do as he likes without putting forth any effort. A person can attain a good character only when he works at it and persists in doing the right things. But ignorant individuals see no reason to train their egos or use their wills. They do not believe in the Hereafter or that on the Day of Judgment, they will be called to account as to whether they acted according to their conscience. So they cannot see why they should subject themselves such drudgery or why they should not behave

however they please. However, they are wrong and will give an account for everything they have done while not consulting their conscience.

In addition, a good moral character allows people to enjoy this life, for it produces joy and delight in the human spirit that cannot be compared in intensity to any material gain. No one can understand this in the absence of direct experience. This delight is the exact opposite of the emptiness produced in the human spirit by unbelief. Since the joy and contentment that comes from listening to one's conscience cannot be found in the greed for worldly gain, the unbelievers' egotistical character causes them to live in a world of darkness, one that has no room for generous and tolerant, gentle and forgiving, and compassionate and loving people. Therefore, they are doomed to live in a world of chaos and upheaval, one that offers no peace, friendship, or tranquility. Unable to take pleasure in being generous, they live with the pangs of conscience that selfishness brings. Since they have never known how to be tender or speak gently, they suffer from living in a contentious and quarrelsome environment. They know the physical and emotional misery of frustration, and respond to it by shouting and resorting to physical violence.

They live in a difficult environment, one in which people speak with sarcasm and anger and are anxious to satisfy their desire for revenge. Unable to easily show humility, they become hardened by pride and gloomy arrogance. They always want more, know nothing of the spiritual tranquility that comes from being thankful and content, and have to endure the difficulties that come from being greedy and avaricious. They are in constant distress because they act against their conscience. And the fact that those people around them display this same moral character makes them always sad and frustrated. Of course, those who intend to live good lives and make the best use of this world's bounty are greatly disappointed by such benighted lives. But never forget, these individuals have chosen these lives of darkness by their own free will. While it is possible for them to believe in Allah and to enjoy both worlds' abundant pleasures, they are content with this world's few transient material pleasures. While they can live a good moral life by choosing to follow their conscience instead of their egotistical desires, they choose the latter. In their desire for a chaotic environment, they knowingly destroy the pleasures they could have had. Allah informs us what awaits such people in the Hereafter:

As for those who do not expect to meet Us, and [who] are content with this world's life and at rest in it, and those who are heedless of Our signs, their shelter will be the Fire because of what they earned. (Surah Yunus: 7-8)

They cannot know the rewards that flow from compassion and mercy

Compassion and mercy are important components of a good moral character. Those with such a character show these qualities, which give them a deep sense of pleasure and enable them to win the love, respect, and admiration of those around them. Mercy brings a person many more fine moral characteristics, and thus they can show more love, respect, tolerance, maturity, sincerity, and

helpfulness. Someone who is merciful thinks of the other person's needs first; people who have no mercy are hardhearted and think of themselves first. Their main concern is to lead their own lives in the best way possible. But their debased character deprives them of many pleasures. In fact, some of them do not even notice the spiritual deprivation to which they have become subjected.

Only believers help those who are cold and hungry on the street, or are generous and humane toward those who are sick. The pleasure that comes from following the Qur'an's morality is not like any material pleasure the world can give. Even if they were given millions of dollars, as well as property and wealth, none of these could be compared with the contentment that comes from having a good moral character. They show this kind of morality for His sake and hope for the reward of His favor, and enjoy the pleasure, joy, and excitement that come from following the Qur'an and the sayings of our Prophet (saas), which are above all other joys. But unbelievers cannot enjoy any of these pleasures because their hardened hearts contain no mercy and compassion. Of course, some of them seem to behave mercifully, but they expect others to be obliged to them in return, or to be able to demand something in exchange for the favors they have done. In the Qur'an, Allah tells us about such people's unseemly moral character:

Have you seen him who denies the religion? He is the one who harshly rebuffs the orphan and does not urge the feeding of the poor. (Surat al-Ma'un: 1-3)

Those who show off and deny help to others. (Surat al-Ma'un: 6-7)

O you who believe. Do not nullify your charity by demands for gratitude or insulting words, like him who spends his wealth, showing off to people and not believing in Allah and the Last Day. His likeness is that of a smooth rock coated with soil, which, when heavy rain falls on it, is left stripped bare. They have no power over anything they have earned. Allah does not guide unbelieving people. (Surat al-Baqara: 264)

Unbelievers approach even their closest friends with the same debased expectations in the hope of obtaining some advantage. For example, as people become more materially and emotionally needy with advancing years, they need someone to care for them and take an interest in them. So, unbelievers show interest, love, and compassion to their relatives while calculating what may happen to them in the future.

But those who do not have a good moral character will be "rewarded" for their behavior. They will be shown only insincere compassion, and no one will form a sincere and close relationship with them. People will offer them compassion only for what they can receive in return. So, they force themselves to live in a world devoid of spiritual values, where compassion and love are debased and where material possessions are the only important considerations. In this way, they receive tangible rewards for their bad moral character. But in the Qur'an, Allah describes as "dark and narrow" the difficult lives of those who deny Him:

“But if anyone turns away from My reminder, his life will be a dark and narrow one and on the Day of Resurrection We will gather him blind.” He will ask: “My Lord, why have you gathered me blind, when before I was able to see?” He will say: “Just as Our signs came to you and you forgot them, in the same way you too are forgotten today.” That is how We repay anyone who is profligate and does not believe in the signs of his Lord. And the punishment of the Hereafter is much harsher and longer lasting. (Surah Ta Ha: 124-127)

They have lost the comforts of living in contentment and security

Unbelievers live in a state of constant tension and discontent, in a world filled with fear and anxiety. They walk the streets with an expression of worry on their faces, afraid that danger may befall them at any moment. Old people seem obviously anxious that someone is going to treat them badly. The needy and the poor appear sad because they know they are looked down upon and disrespected by society. The well-to-do fret that they will be swindled at any moment and have their wealth stolen away from them: These are just a few of the troubled faces to be seen in this society.

This is the situation on the streets, but at home, people experience this same tension and fear in the very place where they should feel safe and at ease. Almost every day, behind closed doors there are family fights and children are treated with impatience; these are but two of the possible sources of this tension. The situation is no different in the workplace. There is rivalry in which one colleague is intolerant of another and each tries jealously to undermine the other; as a result discontent reigns. Everyone in the department is terrified of making a mistake; and the greatest tension comes from trying to hide errors that have already been committed. Many cannot trust their closest friend; there is always the possibility that they will be duped or betrayed; and this gives rise to continual tension.

Everywhere in the world, children may steal from their families, families may beat the children to the point of death, and people can kill others in the streets without hesitation for money. Every day, scenes of fear and horror are dramatized on television. In many countries, terror and violence have become commonplace. Crowded shopping centers or workplaces are frequently bombed, a supposedly secure bank is robbed or the manager embezzles customers’ money, a person may be unfaithful to a spouse, a fellow worker, or someone he or she has protected and cared for. Newspapers are full of such stories. So, what is the cause of all this? The main reason is that people do not follow the Qur'an's morality and do not believe in Allah. If people feared Him as they ought to, they would not treat other people unjustly. Everyone would think well of others, support them, and behave morally. Thus, no anxiety or tension would result, for their environment would be content and secure.

To escape this fear and anxiety, people must put their trust in Allah. Anxiety and tension arise from not being aware that Allah is in control of everything, and from refusing to trust Him and submit to Him. Those who live in constant anxiety do not realize that Allah controls everything that happens, not only to them but to everyone they are in touch with, without exception. They assume that earthquakes,

floods, rainstorms and fires happen spontaneously with no connection with anything else. Because they lack any faith in Allah, they think all these disasters happen by chance or by some imagined bad luck.

This way of thinking only leaves them tense because another such “surprise” could occur at any moment. However, living in this kind of constant fear and anxiety is no solution. On the contrary, anyone experiencing such anxiety lives a very difficult, discontent and unhappy existence and cannot enjoy the good things in life. The solution is to trust in Allah. Everything that happens in the universe is under His control, and He has created everything to be good for His servants. Those who have faith know that whatever seems good, bad or ugly has been created by Allah as a test for human beings and to reward those who do good deeds. Therefore, no matter what befalls, they know that Allah will protect them and everything will turn out for their personal good. For this reason, they are content. He will support those who understand this truth and sincerely submit to Him by sending down to them a sense of serenity from His presence:

He sent down serenity into the hearts of the believers, thereby increasing their faith with more faith – the legions of the heavens and Earth belong to Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Surat al-Fath: 4)

Every event and person is under Allah’s control and can only come about with His permission and knowledge. In the Qur'an, we are informed that no one can do anyone any harm or benefit without Allah’s permission:

If Allah afflicts you with harm, no one can remove it except Him. If He desires good for you, no one can avert His favor. He bestows it on whichever of His servants He wills. He is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surah Yunus: 107)

Knowledge of this truth allows believers to live a secure and content life. Those unbelievers who persist in their own delusions without believing in Allah or obeying the Qur'an cannot know the pleasure that comes from this security, contentment, and happiness. This is only one of the losses that Allah makes them suffer in this Earthly life for having denied Him.

They have lost the joy of living in hope

Unbelievers consider life to be a “certain number of basic facts” and think that being hopeful is a way to “console themselves.” In their view, the basic facts of life are that the wealthy have power and the poor are oppressed, that it is naïve to do anyone any favors, that those who tell the truth are taken advantage of, and having good looks, money, and position can open every door. According to this distorted way of thinking, people should live in this world and judge its people and events accordingly, for such “laws” determine the course of one’s life. And, as they say, unless the world does an “about-face,” these laws will not change.

But these so-called facts of life do not exist; the only facts are those that Allah has revealed in the Qur'an. And, He tells human beings to be hopeful, for His power suffices for everything. He tells us that He will hear our prayers and that those who do good deeds will always receive a better and more beautiful reward:

Everything in the heavens and everything in Earth belongs to Allah, so that He can repay those who do evil for what they did and repay those who do good with the very best. (Surat an-Najm: 31)

But ignorant people base their lives on perverse ideas that leave them in a pessimistic spirit. They judge the world, events and other people from this despairing point of view; and as a result, they live unhappy lives.

This negative, peevish way of thinking dominates their day. They are filled with constant worries about the future. They are constantly concerned about what will happen tomorrow and how they will ever manage to fulfill their desires and aspirations. They worry about these topics nearly all the day – on the street, on the bus, at work and when they go to bed at night – creating countless imaginary scenarios. For example, even before students are accepted into university, they worry about how they will spend their four years there; and worry about where they will find a job after graduation. Then sooner or later, they try to dismiss these imagined fiascoes and banish them from their minds.

But unbelievers always imagine the worst scenarios: They think that they will not be accepted by the university of their choice; if they are accepted that they will not be able to afford it; that they will have to get a job and their studies will suffer; that they will not graduate and, even if they do, will not find a job and be left high and dry after so much effort. This negative spiritual condition projects into the future and also into daily life. They worry about everything: traffic jams, missing the bus, being late for work, getting a reprimand from their supervisor, and making a bad impression. They begin to create imaginary solutions for their imaginary problems. For example, they construct imaginary excuses to explain to their boss why they arrived late. In order to show that they are not lazy or irresponsible, they create more scenarios about what they will accomplish in the rest of the day. But in the Qur'an, Allah tells us that only He knows what has not yet happened:

The keys of the Unseen are in His possession. No one knows them but Him. He knows everything in the land and sea. No leaf falls without His knowing it. There is no seed in the darkness of the ground, and nothing moist or dry that is not in a Clear Book. (Surat al-An'am: 59)

He creates every event – in the past and in the future. So it is senseless for a person to write scripts in his own imagination and to become caught up in endless apprehensions. Everything will happen as Allah wills it.

In the Qur'an, Allah tells human beings never to let themselves be overwhelmed by despair.

... Do not despair of solace from Allah. No one despairs of solace from Allah except for the unbelievers. (Surah Yusuf: 87)

In another verse, He reminds us that those who offer prayers to Him will receive answers:

If My servants ask you about Me, I am near. I answer the call of those who call upon Me. They should, therefore, respond to Me and believe in Me so that, hopefully, they will be rightly guided. (Surat al-Baqara: 186)

If He wills, Allah will surely answer a prayer uttered in hope, and without any doubt or apprehension.

There is no reason to be pessimistic about the future or to look negatively at things that have happened. One must only believe in Allah with a pure heart, trust Him, and submit to Him in the knowledge that whatever happens will be for their own good. The unbelievers, who refuse to do so, will receive the “reward” of a pessimistic and despairing spirit. And as a recompense for their persistently denying Allah, in the world to come, they will live with no hope of salvation. In the Qur'an, Allah describes the state of those who deny Him:

The evildoers will remain timelessly, forever, in the punishment of Hell. It will not be eased for them. They will be crushed there by despair. We have not wronged them; it was they who were wrongdoers. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 74-76)

They do not know the rewards of wisdom and deep reflection

Wisdom is a most-needed quality, and yet it is rarely found. Faced with problems in their daily lives and bewildered by their plans for the future, some people strive to work out all the details as best they can and make the most intelligent decisions about proceeding forward. Whenever they feel that their own knowledge, experience and judgment are insufficient, they look elsewhere for intelligent, knowledgeable, and insightful individuals to give them advice. But they cannot always find such helpful individuals. And the advice they do receive from those around them as to how to solve problems is always much the same – mainly because ignorant people live their lives to please others and in compliance with their expectations. Instead of seeking out what is true, good and useful, they adjust their aims and goals to the expectations of those around them and live according to these criteria. Such people live unreflective lives.

Such a way of life leaves no room for intelligent thought and the exercise of wisdom. Such people already know what they will do, how they will do it, how they will act, and what methods they will use, for their lifestyle has been handed down from generation to generation. They have no desire to examine

their way of life, recognize their errors, and correct them. In the Qur'an, Allah describes the way of thinking in ignorant society:

When they are told: "Follow what Allah has sent down to you," they reply: "We are following what we found our ancestors doing." What, even though their ancestors understood nothing and were not guided! (Surat al-Baqara: 170)

Many people are so accustomed to the manner of living they have inherited from their ancestors that they are not even aware of the lack of intelligence in every aspect of that life style; therefore, they cannot even begin to consider how they might improve their situation. The source of such needed wisdom is faith. Allah reveals this truth in the Qur'an:

O you who believe! If you fear Allah, He will give you the criterion (to distinguish between right and wrong), erase your bad actions, and forgive you. Allah's favor is indeed immense. (Surat al-Anfal: 29)

Believers are able to use their intelligence to change things for the better, discover radical solutions, and abandon stereotyped behavior. Being able to grasp Allah's truths and to live according to them grants one wisdom. As unbelievers are unaware of these truths and the fact that their lives rest on distorted foundations, wisdom is absent from their societies. To ignorant society, this lack of wisdom brings yet another deprivation. Because these people do not exercise their intellect, they are forced to live without the very important elements of thinking and reflection. In many places in the Qur'an, Allah stresses the importance of reason and contemplation. Human beings arrive at the truth through thinking; only through contemplation can they discover what is right and proper, and act accordingly.

In the Qur'an, Allah gives this example of people who do not use their minds:

The likeness of those who do not believe is that of the beast that, even if one calls to it, can hear nothing but a shout and a cry. Deaf, dumb, and blind. They do not use their intellect. (Surat al-Baqara: 171)

The worst of beasts in Allah's sight are the deaf and dumb who have no intellect. (Surat al-Anfal: 22)

The concept of human intelligence includes the capacity to think, conceive, make judgments, and draw conclusions; the ability to comprehend a rare or sudden occurrence and understand, learn, and analyze; and the ability to hone the five senses, sharpen the attention, deepen the ability to think, and notice details. Consequently, those who are deprived of wisdom may be able to live and provide for their needs without it, or to manage to a certain point by training themselves to work by rote and using their accumulated knowledge and experience. But wisdom gives people a different depth and conception, for it opens a vast horizon before them. These people can then guide and direct others to what is true, react

correctly to new or unexpected occurrences, solve difficult and apparently intractable problems, and always produce the best diagnosis for each problem. Besides, being able to live love and trust can only come from wisdom. People can only love and show respect insofar as their wisdom permits. Wisdom raises the spiritual and emotional quality of everything in life. There is richness in a wise person's conversations, attitudes, and actions. The horizons of their thought are broad, unaccustomed, and exemplary, for whatever they do is pertinent and to the point, and everything they say is wise and true.

An ignorant society is deprived of this vital and important feature. People in such a society live out their unreflective lives without exercising wisdom; in a world where mass psychology determines how they feel they should act. Obviously, this prevents them from being aware of – or even examining – their deficiencies; they cannot develop any lasting solutions to their problems and they always look in the wrong places for happiness and satisfaction.

They have lost the rewards that come from being honest, dignified and honorable

Unbelievers respect others on the basis of specific material values. But this respect is false and based on the desire to obtain a benefit from someone. The virtues that command real respect are inimitable and immeasurable in terms of material values. Among these virtues are honesty, dignity, and honor, all of which give people worth and importance, and awaken within them real love and respect. No amount of wealth, beauty, and importance can evoke the respect felt toward an honest, dignified, and honorable person. Such people are naturally dignified and grandeur with the nobility and depth of spirit.

But unbelievers cannot experience these pleasures or admire those who possess these fine qualities. Their moral degeneration increases daily, and their society causes them to forget the importance of these fine qualities. Some unbelievers consider this degeneration as a kind of modernism and, instead of practicing these virtues, focus on those worldly qualities that will give them prestige in each other's eyes. They place no importance on dignity and honesty, for it is more important where they live, what kind of car they drive, if they follow the latest clothing fashions, or have the latest albums. When it comes to choosing friends, the last thing they look at is the person's moral character, dignity, and honor.

Some people who ignore the Qur'an's morality do not want their friends to value honesty or to act with dignity and honor. For this reason, they prefer friends who are like themselves. Of course, such people cannot respect each other; rather, they behave toward each other in unseemly and peevish ways that reveal their moral degeneration. This is just one of the recurring frustrations that their unseemly morality brings upon them.

The unbelievers have also lost all honor. They do not respond maturely when confronted with ignorant attitudes, or do not hesitate to lie, be hypocritical, behave in unseemly ways, or commit fraud for small gains. They think they can attain honor by possessing more money, property and power, by being arrogant, being condescending toward others, and using their wealth to seem superior. So, having

lost their honesty, dignity, and honor, they live in a world dominated by material values. Just what kind of life does such a world provide for them?

Above all, contrary to their assumptions, moral degeneration does not bring them comfort and freedom. On the contrary, living life to the extreme with unrestrained material desires removes the very qualities that make an individual human and worse, results in a model of society that drags people down into chaos and emptiness. Teenagers wasting their youth following perverse fads, getting addicted to drugs that ruin their lives and bringing themselves to the brink of suicide, are only one example of the extent to this chaos. All these things are caused by the emptiness in such a person's spirit. Believing that they can live without honesty, dignity, and honor, as well as without needing to develop a good moral character by following the Qur'an's morality and practicing human virtues, they collapse both physically and spiritually. The void in their spirits is reflected in their faces, looks, speech, and behavior. Their physical strength deserts them and their beautiful faces arouse no one's admiration, for nothing is left of their spirit and their inner spiritual emptiness is reflected in their faces and empty eyes. Governed by this spiritual void, they cannot acquire the qualities that attract real love, respect, and loyalty. And so they cannot truly love, be real friends, or give value to anyone else. All this occurs because ignorant people have divorced themselves from the moral teachings of the Qur'an. This is the natural result of having no fear of Allah; it's what transpires when people do not act according to their consciences, or place enough importance on a good moral character and the qualities it engenders. The moral teachings of the Qur'an are the only solution to these human frustrations. Only by living according to the morality that Allah has revealed can individual love, be loved, be happy and take pleasure in the beauties of this life.

Living to win Allah's favor: a joy that unbelievers can never experience

Unbelievers waste their lives running after this worldly life and therefore lose the deep joy that comes from following the Qur'an's morality and hoping for His love, friendship, and intimacy. Most people have never felt such a profound feeling. Allah is the believers' closest friend, only helper and support, and only beloved, and so they dedicate themselves to winning His favor. From the moment a believer awakens up in the morning, he spends all his time behaving in the moral way that Allah approves, in the hopes of winning His love. For a person of faith, acting every moment so as to please Allah is a source of joy and great pleasure. In the same way, avoiding behavior that does not please Him, never compromising his faithfulness and attachment, produces a sense of deep happiness in a believer's heart. A faithful believer tries all his life to be the one that Allah loves most, the one He is most pleased with and to be the closest to Him. The pleasure that these efforts bring cannot compare to the pleasure that any earthly blessing can give.

In the Qur'an, Allah reveals: "**Allah took Ibrahim as an intimate friend**" (Surat an-Nisa': 125). Believers follow example of the prophets. In order to be worthy of blessing of friendship that Allah gave

to Prophet Ibrahim (as) and be close to Him, they spend their lives pursuing this intimacy. In the Qur'an, Allah reveals the following about those who maintain their faith:

The forerunners – the first of the Migrants (Muhajirun) and the Supporters (Ansar) – and those who have followed them in doing good: Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. He has prepared Gardens for them with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, for ever and ever. That is the great victory. (Surat at-Tawba: 100)

A person with faith will do everything he can to be the kind of person Allah describes in the Qur'an, so as to please Him. The joy that their sincere efforts create in their spirit, as well as the sense of contentment and security that it engenders in the conscience, give them great pleasure. All these are pleasures that believers will enjoy forever in the world to come. Allah announces the glad tidings of mercy, approval and Paradise for His servants:

Say: "Shall I tell you of something better than that?" Those who guard against evil will have Gardens with their Lord, with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, forever, and purified spouses, and the Pleasure of Allah. Allah sees His servants. (Surah Al 'Imran: 15)

But ignorant people live unaware that these blessings even exist. They do not listen to their consciences and instead, pursue their own desires and passions; as a result, they are deprived of all these good things now and to come. And as is the case with other blessings, their deprivation will last in the world to come as long as Allah wills it.

IT IS POSSIBLE TO RETRIEVE THESE LOST PLEASURES

Many people express that they are unhappy, even though they have many wonderful blessings as well as the means to enjoy them, and regard life as full of difficulty and anxiety. But during their lives, they have to stop and ask themselves what they are doing, what their goals are, and where they are going. They have to consider that life amidst so many wonderful and pleasant things should not be so difficult, painful, and unhappy. They should look for the source of their spiritual emptiness and the meaninglessness of their lives, and understand that wasting more time will only increase their unhappiness. Although they base their lives on making the best and most pleasant use of their resources, they must realize that there is a special reason why they cannot be happy and enjoy their blessings. They must see this situation as part of Allah's mercy and compassion, which is designed to give them countless opportunities to turn to Him and follow the Qur'an's morality.

They should not start to think about these things when they have lost everything and death is approaching; rather, they should do so the first time He shows them the truth and warns their conscience. When they come to this point, if they are sincere, Allah will show them the true path and what they ought to do. As He is All-Knowing and closer to them than their jugular vein, He will know what they desire and seek, and will show them the right road and how to escape their anxieties. However, if people do not change, it is their own fault, for:

Any good thing that happens to you comes from Allah. Any bad thing that happens to you comes from yourself. (Surat an-Nisa': 79)

In another verse, He says that should a person desire to change his situation, he must first make a sincere change in his heart:

... that is because Allah would never change a blessing He has conferred on a people until they had changed what was in themselves. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Surat al-Anfal: 53)

The moment people decide to change and sincerely examine themselves, and then alter their way of thinking, Allah will know it and change His blessings on them, for His forgiveness and generosity are infinite and His mercy is immense:

... except for those who repent and put things right and make things clear. I turn toward them. I am the Ever-Returning, the Most Merciful. (Surat al-Baqara: 160)

When people follow the Qur'an's morality, regardless of what they have done in the past, He will forgive them, change their evil into good, and, in return for their good moral character, create for them in this world the goodness and beauty that will continue into Paradise:

... All who submit themselves completely to Allah and do good will find their reward with their Lord. They will feel no fear and will know no sorrow. (Surat al-Baqara: 112)

So Allah gave them the reward of this world and the best reward of the Hereafter. Allah loves those who do good. (Surah Al 'Imran: 148)

Those who produce a good action will receive ten like it. (Surat al-An'am: 160)

Allah's mercy is close to those who do good. (Surat al-A'raf: 56)

Perform prayer at each end of the day and in the first part of the night. Good actions eradicate bad actions. This is a reminder for people who pay heed. And be steadfast. Allah does not let the wage of those who do good go to waste. (Surah Hud: 114-115)

... except for those who repent and believe and act rightly: Allah will transform the wrong actions of such people into good – Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surat al-Furqan: 70)

Those who perform good actions will receive better than them and on that Day will be safe from terror. (Surat an-Naml: 89)

For those who do good in this world there is good, and Allah's Earth is spacious. The steadfast will be paid their wages in full, without any reckoning. (Surat az-Zumar: 10)

That is the good news that Allah gives to His servants who believe and do right actions. Say: "I do not ask you for any wage for this – except for you to love your near of kin. If anyone does a good action, We will increase the good of it for him. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Ever-Thankful." (Surat ash-Shura: 23)

That is how We reward all those who do good. (Surah Yusuf: 22)

Allah will reveal the true path to those who sincerely search for it and help them in their seeking. He will remove the fear, darkness, sadness, and anxiety that used to dominate their lives and replace them with contentment and security. Everyone who sees this truth, submits to Allah, and "**holds fast to the rope of Allah**" (Surah Al 'Imran: 103) should know that they have "**grasped the Firmest Handhold**" (Surah Luqman: 22), will suffer no adversity that Allah does not will, and will live the best possible life in this world and in Paradise, taking the utmost pleasure from all His blessings:

If Allah afflicts you with harm, no one can remove it except Him. If He desires good for you, no one can avert His favor. He bestows it upon whichever of His servants He wills. He is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surah Yunus: 107)

Anyone who acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and recompense them according to the best of what they did. (Surat an-Nahl: 97)

DEATH: THE MOMENT WHEN WORLDLY PLEASURES END

Everyone attached to this world knows, but would prefer to forget, that every one will die one day. Death will wipe out all that they have done to establish a life based upon this world's values. Death will undo long years of amassing possessions and gaining other people's admiration. An individual may be rich, attractive, respected and well-known, but he will lose all his material wealth in a moment. In a short time his body will deteriorate to the point where no one wants to come near him; then it will be interred in the ground to rot away. This is the final end for which a non-believer spends decades of effort towards his achievements in this world. Living a life filled with earthly desires and straining to taste every pleasure to the fullest will do nothing to alter that person's final end. Death will erase all these pleasures. Death will be a moment in which all the desires and passions of a person who denies Allah will come to an end; at that moment he will begin an eternal life of hardship and sorrow. Allah informs us of what they will experience:

How will it be when the angels take them in death, beating their faces and their backs?
(Surah Muhammad: 27)

If you could only see the wrongdoers in the throes of death when the angels are stretching out their hands, saying: "Release your selves! Today you will be repaid with the punishment of humiliation for saying something other than the truth about Allah, and being arrogant about His signs." (Surat al-An'am: 93)

... and one leg is entwined with the other: that Day he will be driven to your Lord. He neither affirmed the truth nor prayed; rather, he denied the truth and turned away. And then went off to his family, swaggering. It is coming closer to you and closer. Then closer to you and closer still. (Surat al-Qiyama: 29-35)

From this, we can see that death is an undeniable reality and, unless Allah wills otherwise, it will be the beginning of eternal agony for all those who deny Him. But some people try to think as little about death as possible while they are alive; they want to forget it and try not to mention it. That is, until death comes . . . Finally realizing that they have spent their whole lives suppressing their conscience and denying death's reality, they immediately take refuge in Allah, hoping to find salvation. But they are too late, for:

And your Lord arrives with the angels, rank upon rank. And that Day Hell is produced, that Day humanity will remember; but how will the remembrance help people? They will exclaim: "Oh! If only I had prepared in advance for this life of mine!" (Surat al-Fajr: 22-24)

Allah gives people a lifetime to see the true path and to know His mercy. Those who refuse to take advantage of this will regret their decision:

They will shout out in it: “Our Lord! Take us out! We will act rightly, differently from the way we used to act!” Did We not let you live long enough for anyone who was going to pay heed to pay heed? And did not the warner come to you? Taste it then! There is no helper for the wrongdoers. (Surah Fatir: 37)

People should know that Allah will not accept the entreaties of those who make only a death-bed repentance. For this reason, everyone should heed Allah's reminders while there is still time and submit to Him before that inevitable, irreversible moment arrives. If a person makes it his goal to enjoy the pleasures of this Earthly life, he must consider, even if he does not want to, that one day these things will definitely come to a close. When the span of life that Allah has given an individual comes to an end, all the pleasures he pursued will lose their value; they will rot along with his body in the earth. This is a plain truth that everyone must understand. In addition, they should realize that denying Allah only brings unhappiness in this world, regret at the hour of death, and agony in the world to come, whereas belief brings a depth of spirit that enables them to enjoy this world's pleasures to the greatest extent and abundant pleasures forever in the Hereafter. People must see the difference between these two states and must submit to the Divine light of belief to escape the darkness of denial.

In this book on the unbelievers' emptiness and unhappiness, their consumption of pleasures, and the meaninglessness of their lives, we have provided the means for them to search for the truth and submit to Allah. Hopefully, they will follow the Qur'an's morality before they face death. Allah tells us that the unbelievers will wish they had believed. But after death, this is no longer a possibility.

It may be that those who disbelieve will wish that they had been Muslims. Leave them to eat and enjoy themselves. Let false hope divert them. They will soon know. (Surah al-Hijr: 2-3)

LOST BLESSINGS IN THE WORLD TO COME

Allah will never look at or speak to the unbelievers

Allah will not speak to them, or look at them, or purify them. They will have a painful punishment. (Surah Al 'Imran: 77)

He will say: "Slink away into it and do not speak to Me." (Surat al-Mu'minun: 108)

They will neither live nor die

... those who will roast in the Greatest Fire and then neither die nor live in it. (Surat al-A'la: 12-13)

Death comes at him from every side but he does not die. And beyond him is relentless punishment. (Surah Ibrahim: 17)

Those who wanted to live on Earth for ever will want to die there

When they are flung into a narrow place in it, shackled together in chains, they will cry out there for destruction. (Surat al-Furqan: 13)

They will have lost all hope

It will not be eased for them. They will be crushed there by despair. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 75)

On the Day the Hour arrives, the evildoers will despair. (Surat ar-Rum: 12)

Instead of living in contentment and security, they will live in adversity and conflict

All this is certainly true – the bickering of the people of the Fire. (Surah Sad: 64)

Arguing in it with one another, they will say: "By Allah, we were plainly misguided." (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 96-97)

He will say: "Do not argue in My presence, when I gave you advance warning of the Threat." (Surah Qaf: 28)

They will be unhappy forever

... [A fire] in which only the most wretched will roast. (Surat al-Layl: 15)

They will never have a sincere and good friend; their only friend will be the Fire

[They will say:] “And now we have no one to intercede for us. We do not have a single loyal friend.” (Surat ash-Shu‘ara’: 100-101)

... they are the Companions of the Fire, remaining in it timelessly, forever. (Surat al-A‘raf: 36)

They will live with wrongdoers forever

When they turn their eyes towards the Companions of the Fire, they will exclaim: “Our Lord, do not place us with the wrongdoers!” (Surat al-A‘raf: 47)

Good news will be forbidden to them

On the Day that they see the angels, there will be no good news that Day for the evildoers. They will say: “There is an absolute ban.” (Surat al-Furqan: 22)

They will not know love or respect; they will be despised and looked down on

... the Day they are shoved roughly into the fire of Hell. (Surat at-Tur: 13)

Those who are herded headlong into Hell, such people are in the worst position. They are the most misguided from the way. (Surat al-Furqan: 34)

[People with intelligence remember Allah:] “Our Lord, those You cast into the Fire, You have indeed disgraced. The wrongdoers will have no helpers.” (Surah Al ‘Imran: 192)

They will want light but will be unable to find it

... [they] will say to those who believe, “Wait for us so that we can borrow some of your light.” They will be told: “Go back and look for light.” And a wall will be erected between them with a gate in it, on the inside of which there will be mercy but before whose exterior lies the punishment. (Surat al-Hadid: 13)

They will have the most evil home

... the Day when the excuses of the wrongdoers will not help them. The curse will be on them, and they will have the most evil Home. (Surah Ghafir: 52)

Their beds and coverlets will be Hell

They will have Hell as a resting-place and covering layers on top of them. That is how We repay wrongdoers. (Surat al-A‘raf: 41)

They will live in dark, misty places

... and the murk of thick black smoke, providing no coolness and no pleasure. (Surat al-Waqi‘a: 43-44)

They will find themselves in narrow, restricted places

When they are flung into a narrow place in it, shackled together in chains, they will cry out there for destruction. (Surat al-Furqan: 13)

They will be gathered up sightless

We will gather the evildoers sightless on that Day. (Surah Ta Ha: 102)

They will never find quiet and refreshment

... not tasting any coolness there or any drink, except for boiling water and scalding pus. (Surat an-Naba’: 24-25)

... and the murk of thick black smoke, providing no coolness and no pleasure. (Surat al-Waqi‘a: 43-44)

They will lose their good looks and become ugly; they will take on a revolting appearance

We pursued them with a curse in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be hideous and spurned. (Surat al-Qasas: 42)

And faces that Day will be glowering. (Surat al-Qiyama: 24)

On the Day of Resurrection, you will see those who lied against Allah with their faces blackened. Do not the arrogant have a dwelling place in Hell? (Surat az-Zumar: 60)

Eyes downcast, darkened by debasement, that will be the Day that they were promised. (Surat al- Ma‘arij: 44)

All blessings and all kinds of food to be found in Paradise will be forbidden to them

They will say: “Allah has forbidden them to the unbelievers.” (Surat al-A‘raf: 50)

They will live in fear

Do not consider Allah to be unaware of what the wrongdoers do. He is merely deferring them to a Day on which their sight will be transfixed, rushing headlong – heads back, eyes vacant, hearts hollow. (Surah Ibrahim: 42-43)

Eyes downcast, darkened by debasement, that will be the Day that they were promised. (Surat al-Ma‘arij: 44)

Their only food will be boiling water, blood, pus, and fire

Then they will have a boiling brew to drink on top of it. (Surat as-Saffat: 67)

And beyond him is Hell, where he will be given pus to drink. He gulps at it, but can hardly swallow it. (Surah Ibrahim: 16-17)

... and drink scalding water on top of it, slurping like thirst-crazed camels. (Surat al-Waqi‘a: 54-55)

This! So let them taste it – boiling water and scalding pus. (Surah Sad: 57)

... nor any food, except exuding pus. (Surat al-Haqqa: 36)

[They] take nothing into their bellies but fire. (Surat al-Baqara: 174)

**Instead of the blessings of Paradise,
they will eat Zaqqum and a bitter thorny bush**

The Tree of az-Zaqqum is the food of the wicked, seething in the belly like molten brass, as boiling water bubbles and seethes. “Seize him and drag him bodily.” (Surat ad-Dukhan: 43-46)

Is that better by way of hospitality or the tree of Zaqqum, which We have made to be an ordeal for the wrongdoers? It is a tree that emerges in the depths of the blazing fire. Its fruits are just like the heads of satans. (Surat as-Saffat: 62-65)

[You unbelievers] will eat from the tree of Zaqqum, filling your stomachs with it. (Surat al-Waqi‘a: 52-53)

... and food that chokes, and a painful punishment. (Surat al-Muzzammil: 13)

They have no food but a bitter thorny bush, which neither nourishes nor satisfies. (Surat al-Ghashiyya: 6-7)

CONCLUSION

Wherever you are at this very moment, stop and take a brief look around you. Try to sincerely take in all of the surrounding beauty without missing any of it. Think about the blessings and the possibilities that you have, and then think of those who are worse off than you. Soon, you will notice that you can see more beautiful things and grasp the details, and that you can rejoice in what is around you far more than you had ever imagined. It is a great blessing to breathe freely, enjoy the taste of one's favorite food, and stretch out and sleep comfortably when tired. It is wonderful to have the freedom to enjoy these many blessings at all times without even thinking about it. Not everyone has the same blessings, but for the ones that are missing (e.g., good health), Allah, in His infinite mercy, gives them other blessings.

Those who are happy, realizing this for the first time and having a deep joy in their spirit, should know that this life contains many more wonderful things. Perhaps they have never considered these blessings because of the pessimistic mental state that derives from disbelief. Perhaps they have never realized how important these wonderful blessings are. They may not see that He has created everything for humanity's contentment, comfort, and happiness; they may not understand that they should thank Him. Even if they have been heedless, their past will be wiped out if they sincerely acknowledge this truth and submit to Him. He created them, protects and sustains them; He showers them with love, compassion, and mercy, and gives them countless blessings. In return, they must live in a way that pleases Him.

They must know that their life will change after making such a decision. For one thing, they will see that their life has never been so good. While many problems used to make their life hellish, they will begin to live a life on earth resembling the life of Paradise. Every blessing will take on a new meaning, and they will finally begin to realize how many beautiful things around them give them joy, pleasure, and happiness. For the first time, they will truly enjoy loving and being loved; they will experience the joy that friendship, faithfulness, and good morality bring. And most important of all, they will feel the profound excitement of having Allah as their friend and the hope of winning His love, intimacy, and approval.

This good life on Earth is Allah's promise to the believers, and Allah does not break any of His promises (Surat ar-Rum: 6). He announces the glad tidings of infinite beauty of the life of Paradise to those who have taken refuge in Him and have borne their trials patiently. In both worlds, Allah offers people the best life, one that suits their soul.

For this reason, everyone should comprehend this reality and make a conscious vow to attain it.

Which is preferable? A few decades of unhappiness, sadness, and anxiety during which all pleasures are used up to be followed by a life of agony in Hell, or a life of friendship, closeness, and intimacy with Allah, in which His approval is won; a life of contentment and security in which every moment is filled with pleasure to be followed by the eternal life of Paradise, the pleasures of which will never be consumed?

Surely, the only way for those who use their minds and conscience is the way of submission to Allah and following the Qur'an's morality. Hopefully, this book will enable people to see this reality and attain His mercy.

O you who believe! Enter Islam totally. Do not follow in the footsteps of satan. He is an outright enemy to you. (Surat al-Baqara: 208)